



INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR IRELAND



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ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS 2023

International Fund for Ireland

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KEY PRIORITIES

The IFI delivers peace and reconciliation work across the six counties of Northern Ireland and the six southern border counties as illustrated in the map.



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CHAIR'S FOREWORD

This annual report covers a significant period for the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) – namely the anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. These celebrations allowed those working within peacebuilding and reconciliation to take stock of how far we have come in our journey and what the next period of peacebuilding will entail.

A key theme throughout this period is the important role played by everyday peacemakers who are working to nurture peace and reconciliation in their local communities, supported by the IFI through its key programmes.

As Chair, I, along with IFI colleagues, participated in the Assembly of European Regions (AER) Conference in Leuven, Belgium in summer 2023. This brought together leading policymakers, practitioners, and experts from the island of Ireland, the UK and wider Europe to share insights on community-led peacebuilding projects. The theme of this event was 'PEACE 25: Everyday Peacemakers'.





LEFT: IFI Chair Paddy Harte, Irish Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs Micheál Martin, Damien McKenna, New Leaf Project Co-ordinator and participants meet US President Joe Biden in Dundalk.

This reporting period continued to see communities deal with a range of challenges that impact on progress and community relations, with a focus on safeguarding culture, identity, and legacy related issues. The continued absence of a functioning NI Executive put further pressure on those working on the ground to deliver for local communities.

It was also a period which saw the US President Joe Biden visit. President Biden was the last speaker in the Senate vote that established US support for the IFI in 1986, saying that it would "demonstrate the depth of American commitment" to building peace. The President's visit reiterated the key role the US played throughout the Peace Process and its continued support for the IFI. This report also provides an update on the American Management and Business Internship Training Programme (AMBIT), which is the IFI's leadership outreach initiative in partnership with the US Consulate in Belfast, managed by the Washington Ireland Programme (WIP). The AMBIT 2023 study group visited El Paso, Texas and Washington DC, and you will read more about their experiences.

This report showcases some of the important work being delivered across projects being funded via the IFI's four programmes. You will notice the impact these groups are having on the lives of individuals and local communities and their ability to adapt to changing environments and to meet the needs of their local areas.

The range of support provided shows the breadth of work that is being carried out by projects on behalf of the IFI.

Significant progress has been made in communities that are living near Peace Barriers and interfaces, bringing local residents together to engage and consult on what their future could look like without these barriers. Projects including TASCIT, DCP and IMAGINE – which you will read more about in this report – demonstrate an understanding of the impact living close to these barriers has on people's lives. They use this knowledge to tailor support that provides local residents with confidence to engage, enabling them to understand that change will not happen without their contribution.

The objectives of the Personal Youth Development Programme (PYDP) aim to support young people in developing life skills



LEFT: IFI Chair Paddy Harte pictured with Beyond the Ball participant and Programme Manager Catherine Ryan.



TOP LEFT: IFI Chair Paddy Harte with Joe Kennedy, Special Envoy to Northern Ireland for Economic Affairs.



TOP RIGHT: IFI Chair Paddy Harte meets Lord Caine.

that foster good relations, build confidence and resilience, preparing them for potential employment. Access to training and accredited learning for example has provided much needed opportunities for young people to change their future prospects and projects such as Fermanagh Positive Youth Outlook, the Footsteps Project in Drogheda and Maghera Cross Community Link all demonstrate the impact these programmes are having on young people.

Funded through the IFI's Peace Impact Programme (PIP), the 'Better Together - Níos Fearr Le Chéile' Project works across four counties – Leitrim, Cavan, Tyrone, and Fermanagh and is managed by Ballinamore Area Community Council. It is a prime example of how a project is making substantial progress in breaking down barriers in a border area that has been negatively impacted by The Troubles.

The IFI's newest programme, Communities in Partnership (CiPP), is starting to deliver tangible outcomes, having been in operation for just over twelve months, with the first tranche of funding allocated in 2022. You will read about projects which are offering a range of initiatives aimed at developing important cross-border relations whilst building capacity across a range of areas that have a positive impact for all communities involved. Collaborating with schools and colleges, developing arts initiatives and awareness-raising campaigns all form part of this and you will read about projects such as Politics in Action and the Creative Border Arts Programme delivering on these objectives.

As the IFI plans our new strategy and what the next part of this journey looks like, we welcome tentative political progress in Northern Ireland and look forward to engaging with all relevant stakeholders on how we can continue to bring people together and ensure a sustainable peace for all communities.

2023 saw the passing of our Board colleague and friend, Ross Mealiff. Ross joined the IFI Board in 2022 and his strong leadership and passion for community engagement was evident from day one. Ross brought valuable insight, passion and dedication to the board and he continues to be missed.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank the Joint Chairs and Members of the Inter-Governmental Advisory Committee for their guidance and advice; and the Secretariat, our Programme Managers, Managing Agents and partners for their commitment and hard work.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude for the continued commitment of our donor governments, without whom we would be unable to provide the support we do.



LEFT: L to R; Aodhán Connolly, Director of European Division & Head of Office of NI Executive in Brussels, IFI Chair Paddy Harte, Irish Ambassador Kevin Conmy and Mayor of Messines, Sandy Evrard pictured at a commemoration event in Belgium.

THE BOARD

The Board of the International Fund for Ireland is appointed jointly by the British and Irish Governments. Representatives of the United States of America, the European Union, Canada, Australia and New Zealand attend meetings of the Board.

The United States of America, the European Union and Governments of Canada, Australia and New Zealand were represented this year by: Stella O'Leary, Mr Tom Foley, United States of America; Ms Joanne Knight, European Union; Mr Brian Doherty, Canada; Gary Gray, Australia and HE Brad Burgess and Sir Trevor Mallard, New Zealand.



Paddy Harte – Chair

Mr Harte has been a member of the Board of the International Fund for Ireland since March 2015 and was appointed Chair in March 2019. He has more than two decades of experience and expertise in economic development and peacebuilding work.

He is a former Board Member of the cross-border finance company Ulster Community Investment Trust (now Community Finance Ireland) and the Collins Institute think-tank. He has served on the boards of a number of economic development boards including chairing the very successful Donegal Gathering. He has also worked as a leadership coach with a coalition of cross-party MLAs at the William J Clinton Leadership Institute, Belfast.



Bernie Butler – Board Member

Mrs Butler is a successful business person in the Food sector, as the CEO and one of the founder members of the family run business Good4U with sites in Sligo and Tyrone. Bernie has been at the cutting edge of the food industry for the past 30 years.

In addition to being a Board Member of the International Fund for Ireland, Bernie serves her local community as a member of the Sligo Economic Forum. Other positions held by Bernie include: Chair of Fáilte Ireland North West, Chair of The Model, Sligo, one of Ireland's leading contemporary arts centres and well known art collections, Member of the Creative Sligo Initiative, and Board Member of St Angela's Food Technology Centre Sligo.



Anne Carr – Board Member

Ms. Carr has a long history in community peacebuilding and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. She is a founding pioneer parent of integrated education, having been instrumental in the inception and development of All Children's Integrated Primary School, Newcastle, Co. Down, founded in 1986 and Chair of the Board of Governors for fourteen years. She was Regional Co-Ordinator of the Women Together for Peace organisation from 1990 – 2001 and co-founded the Community Dialogue organisation in 1997. She was their Regional Dialogue Development and Research Co-Ordinator for many years and is still active as a Board member and volunteer dialogue practitioner today. She was the first elected Councillor for the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, serving on Down Council from 1997 – 2001. In 2008 she received the N. I. Community Relations Council Award for Outstanding Achievement in the field of Community Relations and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.



Avila Kilmurray – Board Member

Dr. Kilmurray was a founding member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, she was involved in negotiations for the Good Friday Agreement. Currently, Avila is a Programme Manager with The Social Change Initiative, an international NGO working to strengthen civil society activism and advocacy in human rights, migration issues and peacebuilding.

Avila was the Director of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, she also acted as Regional Coordinator of the Rural Action Project (NI) and was Development Officer with the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action; a founder member of the Foundations for Peace Network - a peer learning network of independent foundations working in conflict-affected environments and serves on the Board of the St. Stephen's Green Trust (Ireland). She is also a member of the Transition Assistance Practice Expert Group of IFIT that supports peacebuilding initiatives on a global basis.



Sadie Ward-McDermott – Board Member

Mrs Ward-McDermott has been working in Education and Training for over 25 years. Sadie started her career as a teacher and then took a post with the Louth VEC (Vocational Education Committee) working as an Adult Education Officer.

Sadie is currently employed as Director of Further Education and Training with the Louth Meath Education and Training Board. This work encompasses working in partnership with other agencies, to deliver peace programmes alongside provision on behalf of Government in the following areas: Adult and Community education, programmes targeting young persons not engaged in education/training, training to enable up-skilling of current workforce, supporting employers to grow skills development in company, and Further Education Colleges.



Peter Osborne – Board Member

Mr Osborne has been involved in political engagement, policy, participation, dispute resolution and reconciliation. He leads Rubicon undertaking a number and range of audits, strategies, mediations and planning. Peter is chair of the regional board of Remembering Srebrenica; and chairs the ARK Advisory Board, a joint social policy initiative by Northern Ireland's two universities (QUB and UU).

Peter was an elected representative for 12 years during which time he was a delegate to the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation and to the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement process. He was a director of the Building Change Trust; led the founding of the Open Government Network; chaired the Community Relations Council and chaired the Parades Commission for Northern Ireland.

The International Fund for Ireland was established as an independent international organisation by the British and Irish governments in 1986. With contributions from the British and Irish governments, the United States of America, the European Union, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, the total resources committed by the Fund to date are in the region of £771m / €963m / \$982m (US dollars).



OBJECTIVES

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE IFI ARE:

- To promote economic and social advance; and
- To encourage contact, dialogue and reconciliation between Unionists and Nationalists throughout Ireland.

* The Sterling/Euro conversion rate at 30 September 2023 is applied throughout this report

INTRODUCTION

The Board of the IFI is appointed jointly by the British and Irish Governments. It is assisted by an Advisory Committee comprising of officials appointed by the two Governments.

The administration of the IFI is provided by a Secretariat, headed by Joint Directors General, based in Belfast and Dublin. A range of bodies act as Managing Agents for the IFI in Northern Ireland.

In addition, the IFI has three Programme Managers, located across the southern border counties, who act as local contact points and assist prospective applicants to identify and develop proposals. They also monitor the ongoing operation of projects, providing assistance as necessary. This Report, which covers the period 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2023, is presented by the Board to the Government of the United Kingdom, the Government of Ireland, the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Fund's donors in accordance with Article 12 of the Agreement of 18 September 1986, as amended, by which the International Fund for Ireland was established.

The Fund's Connecting Communities Programmes cluster around four key areas, which include: Communities in Partnership, Peace Barriers, Peace Impact and Personal Youth Development. All programmes are characterised by:

- a clear focus on reconciliation as the overriding objective;
- a focus on community transformation rather than conflict management;
- an emphasis on engaging with individuals and communities that have not previously, or only partially, participated in peacebuilding and community development activities;
- an independent and credible approach with strong international backing;
- a cross-community, cross-border approach;
- a willingness to take risks on behalf of local communities;
- early support for community initiatives;
- co-operation with other funders and leverage of funds from other sources;
- a willingness to innovate and to break new ground in support of reconciliation;
- and – a responsive approach to donor priorities.

COMMUNITIES IN PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

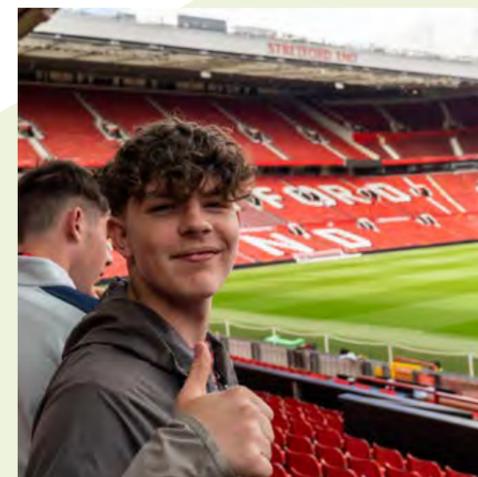
It has been clear for some time that Brexit is likely to have significant consequences for the island of Ireland. Borders are in danger of, once again, becoming a significant barrier, physically and psychologically, to harmonious relationships on these islands. The issues impacting border counties (north and south) are still evolving but it is likely they will represent significant challenges for governments.

TOP LEFT & RIGHT: The CiPP Programme encourages meaningful collaboration on a cross-border and cross-community basis.



These issues pose the risk of individuals and communities becoming isolated and alienated. The IFI is continuing to further its mission of encouraging contact and dialogue across this island. The IFI is working to ensure that the bonds of friendship, neighbourliness and partnership built over the past number of years continue to flourish.

Our Communities in Partnership Programme (CiPP) aims to embed cross-border co-operation. It seeks to build resilience in the face of uncertainty and friction, and support the development of local leadership.



In line with our strong belief that communities are best placed to design their own future, groups are encouraged to put forward initiatives that show innovation and creativity in addressing the challenges they face.

The first Projects under CiPP were approved at the June 2022 Board Meeting. Projects involved in the programme must meet two criteria; build genuine connections on a cross-border basis and that provide meaningful benefit to the communities involved. These bring people together to serve their communities in imaginative ways such as:

- Using culture and the arts to create a space for people to deepen their understanding of the past and set a path for their future
- Launching initiatives that strengthen civic engagement thereby empowering communities to face difficult conversations set a path for their future
- Facilitating contact and discussion between diverse groups working on peace and reconciliation across the island
- Creating projects that engage and empower young people from both sides of the border
- Taking practical steps to improve people's social and material wellbeing
- Creating the conditions necessary for the development of social enterprise and innovation.

LEFT: A young participant at Manchester United's Old Trafford Stadium as part of a CiPP Project visit.

CiPP PROJECTS

During the financial year the IFI committed financial assistance to the following projects:

ARMAGH CITY, BANBRIDGE AND CRAIGAVON

1. County Armagh Community Development, Armagh
2. Centre for Cross Border Studies, Armagh

BELFAST CITY

3. Integrated Education Fund, Belfast
4. Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre, Belfast
5. Politics In Action, Belfast
6. Disability Action NI, Belfast
7. NICVA - Transforming Leadership, Belfast

8. The John and Pat Hume Foundation, Belfast

DERRY CITY AND STRABANE

9. North West Cultural Partnership, Londonderry

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN

10. Community Restorative Justice Newry/Armagh

DONEGAL

11. AGD Gweedore, Doiri Beaga

12. Inishowen Development Partnership, Inishowen

13. Rathmullen The Way Forward CLG, Rathmullen

SLIGO, LEITRIM, DONEGAL, LOUTH

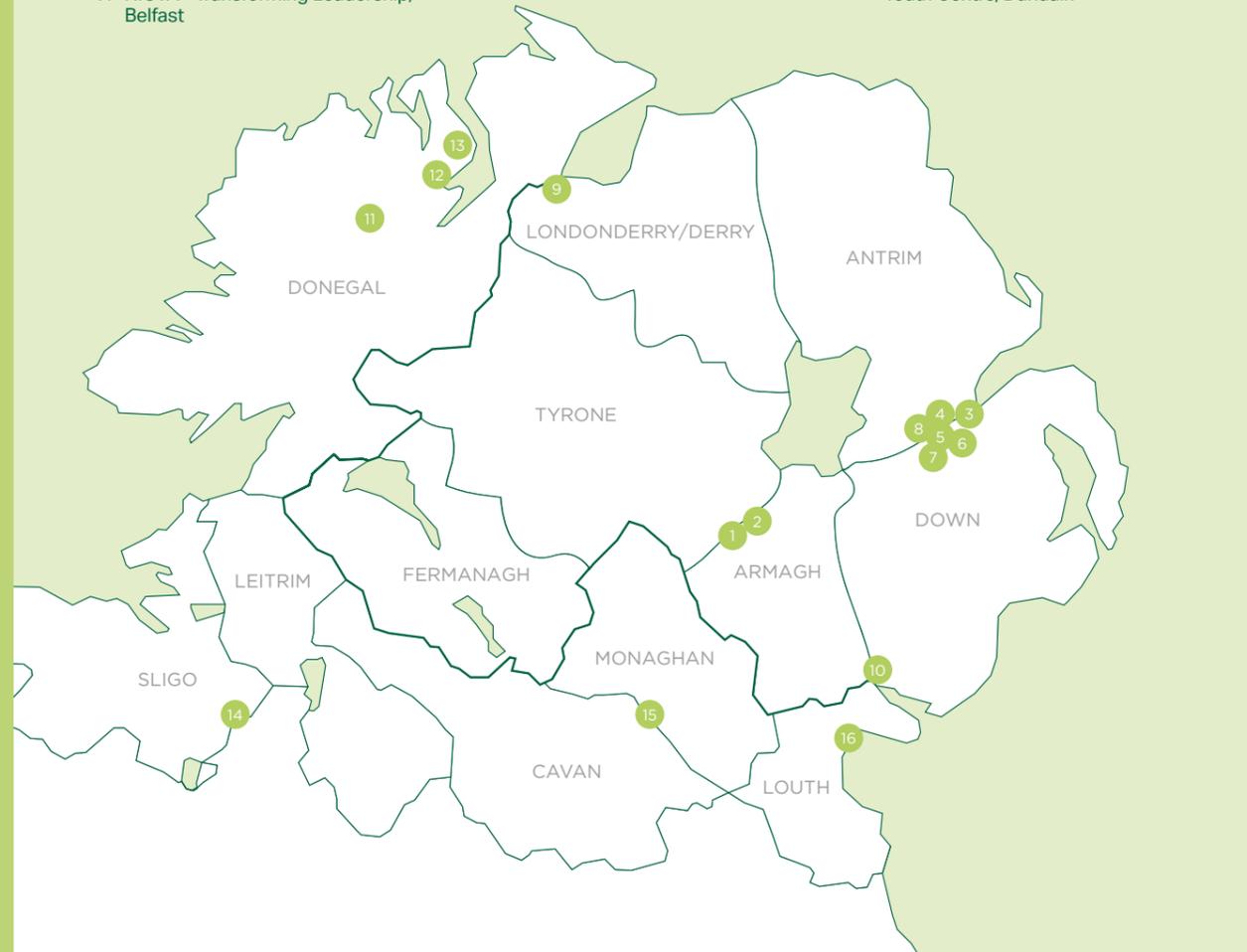
14. Beyond the Ball, Ballina

ARMAGH, CAVAN, FERMANAGH, TYRONE AND MONAGHAN

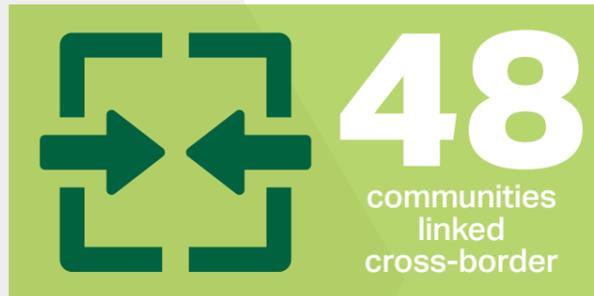
15. Storytellers of Ireland

LOUTH

16. Louth Comhairle na nOg/Dundalk Youth Centre, Dundalk



In the last reporting year the CiPP Programme has delivered:



OUR AIM: To embed lasting relationships on a cross-border basis by supporting cooperation and innovation between groups and organisations North and South on projects that have a meaningful benefit for local communities.



(Note – the numbers presented above are totals, and the number of unique individuals / communities may be lower)

POLITICS IN ACTION (PIA)



Giving fifth year pupils and sixth formers a platform to speak on the issues that impact their lives, and empowering them to bring these concerns to governments and political leaders in a way that can help bring about meaningful and lasting change, are cornerstones of the work of Belfast based group Politics in Action (PiA).

ABOVE: Pupils from Loreto Community School in Milford Portadown College pictured during a session.



LEFT: (L-R) Lord Mayor of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Margaret Tinsley, pictured with Thérèse Cullen, Project Manager, Politics in Action, Chloe Martin, Loreto Community school in Milford, Co Donegal, Sophie Beattie, Portadown College, Co Armagh and Paul Smyth, Executive Director, Politics in Action and Avila Kilmurray, Board Member with the International Fund for Ireland (IFI).

Overseen by Executive Director Paul Smyth with support from Project Manager Thérèse Cullen, PiA used the first tranche of its Communities in Partnership Programme (CiPP) funding to bring 20 pupils from Loreto Community School in Milford, County Donegal, and 20 of their peers from Portadown College to prepare them for the challenges of leadership in whichever career path they choose.

In tandem with trips to each other's communities, twelve facilitated sessions allowed participants to pick apart, and explore at length, the key issues they believe present a real challenge to their future, with equality and diversity, mental health, and climate change some of the areas covered.

Given Portadown's mainly Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist (PUL), and Milford's Catholic, Nationalist, Republican (CNR) resident make-up, the two schools were considered suitable partners; PiA had been working with Portadown College for a number of years, whilst Loreto Community School was part of its first cross-border project.

"The participants are all young people studying politics and what we are trying to do is bring the subject to life a little bit more by taking the issues they care about and helping them bring these issues to politicians and people of influence," says Paul.

"They are very motivated and what their teachers have told us is, it is actually helping to lift their performance academically because the subject they are studying is more interesting for the simple reason they get to meet politicians who they sometimes feel don't properly represent them or their views, so the project has given them a sense of efficacy that they get to tell politicians how they are feeling, and work with them on big issues.

"There is an appetite for bringing politics to life a bit more for young people, and the schools know that there is real value in having a partner who can take risks the schools cannot when it comes to impassioned discussions about sensitive or controversial issues whether it is gender and sexuality, or discussing the idea of a 'United Ireland' or 'Shared Ireland'. These can be difficult discussions for teachers but we, as a youth organisation, can create the space for them."

Apart from getting to know one another and sharing their views, discussions shaped a youth manifesto that was launched last June in Milford and Portadown. Although living in different jurisdictions, some 90-miles apart, both groups concluded they face, and care about, many of the same societal issues.

"In April we took the group to Dáil Éireann and they talked to TDs involved in the Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, and Emer Currie who was working to start a Shared Island Youth Forum," says Thérèse.

"The group expressed their frustration and the need for youth participation. Emer asked for a copy of the manifesto when it came out as did TD Joe McHugh, and Senator Niall Blaney who circulated it to every political party. We've been delighted to get four young people from the project onto the Forum and to be seen as a valuable partner for this important project."

Participants also had the opportunity to rub shoulders with the former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and ex-Irish Taoiseach Bertie Ahern last April in Belfast at an event in Queen's University to mark the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. It was a particularly special moment for 17-year-old Jack McBride who, despite his quiet and reserved nature, summoned the courage to read the poem he penned in front of a packed auditorium. The Loreto Community School pupil also recited it to Joe Kennedy III – US President Joe Biden's Special Envoy to Northern Ireland.

"Jack was going to have someone else read it that day, but I got a text from his teacher on the way up saying he was going to do it himself as he had been practising with his granny," recalls Thérèse.

"Joe took a copy of the poem, and he had Jack read it to him. We didn't think that could be topped until the next day, the third day of the conference, when Joe Kennedy was giving a speech and he spoke about his meeting with Jack before quoting from his poem, so that was the icing on the cake. And it turned Jack into a bit of a celebrity in Donegal as he spoke on radio and appeared in the papers."



LEFT: PIA participant Jack McBride shares his poem.

In the next phase of the project, Paul and Thérèse plan to continue working with both schools to deepen their relations with each other and with the two communities in which they are based. They will carry out cross-border action projects on issues identified as being important to them, and linking up with other agencies or partners, is also on the agenda.

"In the longer-term, what we would like to do is develop a model that can be used right across the region because I think there are real benefits to be had from linking schools across the border in building understanding between different groups," says Paul.

"So far, the project has exceeded expectations, there are a lot of positives to be taken from that, so it cracks me up when adults say, 'Young people are the future', because it denies them agency in the here and the now and I challenge those who say this, because it implies their opinion does not matter now, or they cannot lead now.

"I think we really need to invite young people to help us get through the problems we have not dealt with, like legacy, and the fact some are still brutalised by paramilitary organisations. The project's participants want to work with older people to create and build solutions and a better society going forward. They all want to be able to realise their potential and they want to be able to do that at home rather than having to leave home to find the kind of opportunities they want."

BOGSIDE & BRANDYWELL INITIATIVE (BBI)



Based in the GasYard Centre in Derry-Londonderry, the Bogside and Brandywell Initiative has long been an important deliverer of the International Fund for Ireland's Peace Barriers Programme (PBP).

ABOVE: A recent multicultural event held in Donegal to support migrants who have moved to the area.



LEFT: The Project came together with key partners to deliver a road safety conference and RTC re-enhancement for young students from Moville Community College, Deele College Raphoe, Royal and Prior in Raphoe and Scoil Mhuire Secondary School in Buncrana.

In July 2022, thanks to its broad portfolio of work, it secured new funding through the Communities in Partnership Programme (CiPP) to build resilience and develop local leadership at a grassroots level.

This has allowed the Bogside and Brandywell Initiative to cultivate strong working relationships with Buncrana-based the Hive Cancer Support Group (formerly the Pink Ladies' Cancer Support Group); County Donegal's Killea Community Park; and The Life After Support Group which operates in Derry-Londonderry, Strabane and Donegal.

Together, they share the same objective of contributing to cross-border collaboration on a range of health, well-being and safety awareness-raising campaigns that have been identified as crucial to maintaining peace and stability, particularly in those areas known to be socially disadvantaged. Under Manager Donna McCloskey, the project has had a busy first year, with activities aimed at different age categories.

In February, an information event was organised by the Hive Cancer Support Group at the Inishowen Gateway Hotel that coincided with World Cancer Day. Guests heard about the launch of the Hive Cancer Support Group's North West Services and their expansion into the south, with speakers including the organisation's Family Support and Liaison Officer, Sean Harkin.

Meanwhile, the creation of new or the improvement of existing allotments have taken place in Muff, Lifford, and Killea, with this supported over time by gardening classes and hanging basket workshops. Similar work to improve the overall image and feel-good factor of urban settings is in the pipeline, including on ground owned by a Buncrana GAA club.

Another of its recent activities was the re-enactment of a road traffic collision in collaboration with the Life After Group. Organisers welcomed 351 pupils from schools in Buncrana, Moville and Raphoe and staged this just days before the death of seven people in separate accidents in County Tipperary, with a three-year-old boy, and a brother and sister aged 24 and 18, among the victims. Targeting

transition year pupils, talks were given by fire, ambulance, and police representatives in the hope of raising awareness of the consequences that stem from careless/dangerous driving.

However, the work funded by CiPP has not stopped there. "This wasn't in the original plan of the project but there has been a rise in the number of migrants coming into the local communities in which the project works and the people living in those areas didn't really know how to handle it, so we asked the IFI if we could use some of the Good Relations budget to hold cultural events to help Black And Minority Ethnic (BME) groups in those areas," explains Donna.

"We are also looking at how we secure wider community buy-in. For instance, with Lifford, they are just across the River Foyle from Strabane, so one of our new partners will be Strabane Health Improvement Project, and we hope that will build knowledge because they have expertise and influence and are well-established in the town's community development sector. Over the years, people who lived in Strabane have moved to Lifford, and people from Lifford now live in Strabane, so there are families mixing and there is a reason to build community capacity."

Donna believes the resilience of community workers and key partners with support from the IFI will ensure progress continues to be made for the benefit of the people and places they work in, even if curveballs continue to be



thrown in their direction. The most recent was the UK's decision to leave the European single market after 43 years following the referendum result of June 2016.

Such joined-up working would have been a challenge, and in some cases unthinkable, had it not been for the Good Friday Agreement, says Donna: "People will say, 'Nothing's changed since the Peace Process – we're still doing the same things over and over', but I do not agree with that.

"This is a different Derry from the one I moved to 25 years ago – people's attitudes have softened and there is a willingness to integrate and to find their similarities rather than their differences. It has given hope because, talk to anyone from Derry and they would never, ever want to go back – they only want better lives for their children and grandchildren, and the Good Friday Agreement has delivered that. Is it perfect? No. There have been missed opportunities. Derry-Londonderry and the border region have been left behind since the border was demarcated. They have been socio-economically damaged because of their location and the conflict's legacy, and what people really want now is prosperity and a better quality of life – they want to see an improvement.

"The UK City of Culture inspired a generation – those 19, 20 and 21-year-olds – because there was so much activity, and they were so engaged. Derry needs another City of Culture approach to help with that regeneration. I also think that better communication between the different government departments, more partnership working at that level and meaningful engagement are required. That engagement also needs to be included in the school curriculum and although it comes down to individual choice, integrated education will go a long way to breaking down the barriers that exist, something that has happened naturally with the Bogside and Brandywell Initiative."

LEFT: Participants attend a gardening workshop as part of the programme delivery.

CREATIVE BORDER ARTS PROGRAMME



Thanks to the International Fund for Ireland's Communities in Partnership Programme (CiPP), a Cross-Border Creative Arts Programme is paving the way for new friendships, collaborative performances, accredited training in theatre skills, creative writing, and life-changing opportunities for communities in Gweedore, County Donegal, and the city of Derry-Londonderry.

ABOVE: Those involved in the project learn more about WW1 in Belgium during the summer.



LEFT: L to R: Programme Manager Stephen Barrett and Irish Ambassador Kevin Conmy lay wreaths at a commemoration event in Messines, Belgium.

The project has given people with different cultural beliefs, views and experiences, who share an interest in the arts, but live on either side of the border, the opportunity to work together and collaborate, with a World War One-themed theatre performance as the programme's centre piece.

The programme is connecting people with a shared interest in the arts and is supporting actors, writers and artists to develop and showcase their creative skills and talent, through their participation in the different elements of the cross-border programme.

An arts initiative that intentionally paired seasoned professionals with emerging acting talent, it culminated in performances across four theatres in Gweedore, Letterkenny, Belfast and Derry-Londonderry. The play 'Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme,' brought to life the powerful and poignant story of the 36th Ulster Division, through the writing of award-winning Buncrana-born playwright, Frank McGuinness. The idea was to open-up the opportunity for a conversation and dialogue about shared history between communities north and south.

The rehearsal, staging and performance of the play was a cross-border collaboration by the two theatres, Amharclann Ghaoth Dobhair (Gweedore Theatre) which opened its doors back in 1932 to promote access to the arts through the medium of Irish Language and Waterside Theatre in Londonderry which prides itself as being one of the UK's flagship centres for the arts. Both theatres share an interest in reaching new audiences, developing the skills of local talent, and promoting respect for different cultural, literary and language heritage traditions. These shared interests led to the development of the Cross-Border Creative Arts Programme.

With IFI funding secured, the theatres set about the significant planning work needed to bring the performances to life under the direction of Andrew McNulty and Iain Barr at Waterside Theatre, working in collaboration with Pól Mac Cumhaill (Paul McCool) and Eoghan Mac Giolla Bhríghde (Eoin McBride) at Amharclann Ghaoth Dobhair (Gweedore Theatre).

A narrative that captured the essence of friendship, camaraderie and the enduring human spirit was placed at the heart of the storytelling process. "Each theatre wanted to reach new cross-border, cross-community audiences rather than those that are defined to a single area or a single identity

community,” explains Programme Manager Stephen Barrett. “This was also a chance to develop the skills of local people, actors and performers, and people that wanted to get involved in acting, lighting, directing or other aspects of theatre management.”

“It was also important, through the project, to use the arts as a medium to connect people from different community areas, areas that would traditionally be seen as a mainly Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist (PUL) community in the Waterside area of Londonderry, and what would traditionally be seen as a Catholic, Nationalist, Republican (CNR) community within Donegal. That was the core ethos.

“Of most importance to both theatres was the ability to work together through the arts, and to show that communities on each side of the border are open to working together and to showing respect from different languages, identities, cultures, and traditions.

“Through the project, both theatres have had the opportunity to connect and work within a different community area on each side of the border. This is something that may not have happened in the past because of The Troubles, because of maybe a real sense of fear and division built-up during the conflict – this project has helped to break down some of those barriers,” he adds.



ABOVE: Project team and IFI Chair, Paddy Harte pictured at launch event.



LEFT: Actors during a performance of *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme* by Frank McGuinness.

During the three-months of the planning, staging and performance of the play, both theatres and the cast and crew worked in the Waterside and Gweedore for rehearsals, which included a masterclass with playwright Frank McGuinness, a visit through which he spent time with the cast to provide a unique insight into the play and its characters.

According to producer Andrew McNulty, this empowered the actors to deliver an unforgettable spectacle that resonated deeply with our audiences. “The heart of any theatrical production lies in its cast, and I must say that our actors not only rose to the occasion but soared beyond our highest expectations. Throughout the production, they delved deeper into their characters, sculpting them with nuance and authenticity. Witnessing the exchange of knowledge and experience between the veterans of the stage and the fresh faces was a truly enriching experience.

“As a producer, it was my privilege to witness the evolution of this production from its inception to its final performance. We didn’t merely put on a play; we created a place where discussion and diverging opinions could come together in a safe environment to experience a shared history and human story.”

Of all the activities linked to the ‘Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme’ play, a journey of reconciliation to Belgium and France over the summer to visit the graves of service men had arguably the most profound effect, said Pól Mac Cumhail, with these experiences also feeding directly into their work.

“It was a moving experience – it gave us an immersive sense of our shared history before we returned home. It gave both theatres and communities involved in the play a chance to bond and talk about shared experiences – it was very worthwhile because we got to know and trust one another.

“As the project has gone on that trust between people has grown. It has become much stronger. During that time in our shared history, where people came from or what their background was didn’t really matter.

“It made our understanding of what happened to those people during World War One much clearer, especially in Donegal, because people were airbrushed out of history, so there’s an onus on us to remember them and that hidden history – that forgotten history – and the sacrifice that they made.”

The play is only one aspect of the work planned through the Cross-Border Creative Arts Programme. Although many hundreds of people have had the chance to see it – including Frank McGuinness, who made a second trip north to spend time with schools, cast, crew and director David Grant – hundreds more have not, and it is those individual’s that creators want to reach.

“We want to give them a proper sense of what the arts involve and the different components that are required, whether that be lighting, sound or stage engineering, and through the accredited Open College Network training we are going to introduce them to the literary aspect of plays. This will be achieved through a follow-on element of the programme which includes accredited training in arts management practices and through a series of cross-border and cross-community literary workshops and events that will connect communities in East Donegal, Gweedore and Waterside.

The very fact that people in both the Waterside area and the Donegal Gaeltacht are working together on a cross-border and cross-



ABOVE: Producer Andrew McNulty pictured in discussion with playwright Frank McGuinness.

community programme sends out its own positive message and speaks to the progress made since the Good Friday Agreement was signed on April 10, 1998, according to Stephen. In working together both theatres want to inspire other communities to do the same.

“25 years is really a reflection point. We can take a step back and say, ‘Well, we have not actually done too bad, a lot of progress has been made’, and that’s because the one constant that has always been there during that time is that community groups from each tradition on either side of the border have been open, willing, and also enthusiastic about working together.

“The Good Friday Agreement is certainly seen as the start of a Peace Process but to me the Peace Process started a long time ago through the work of community volunteers and the work of groups and ‘Everyday Peacemakers’ that have always worked together. And this project, the work of the two theatres is an example of how that work continues and how important it is to peacebuilding progress.”

CiPP FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

During the financial year the IFI committed financial assistance to the following projects:

Lead Partner Name/Address	Project Description	Financial Commitment
ARMAGH CITY, BANBRIDGE AND CRAIGAVON		
County Armagh Community Development Markethill, Armagh, Co Armagh, BT60 1PH.	The project will create opportunities for people from grass roots communities to interact on a cross-border and cross-community basis engaging participants in workshops to tackle food poverty and supporting greater access to affordable and healthy foods at a local level.	£98,582
Centre for Cross Border Studies 39 Abbey Street, Armagh, Co Armagh, BT61 7EB	The CBenACT project will work to promote dialogue, build community cohesion, and sustainable cross-border and cross-community connections with Creative Spark (Dundalk) and Women's TEC (Newry).	£104,974
BELFAST CITY		
Integrated Education Fund Forestview, Purdys Lane, Belfast, Co Antrim BT8 7AR.	The project which has a research element, provides an opportunity for small rural border areas to come together and look at issues which affect the sustainability of their towns and villages.	OPOF* Funding £10,000
Northern Ireland Trade Union Education & Social Centre trading as Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre 4-6 Donegal Street, Belfast, BT1 2FN.	The Advanced Manufacturing Pathways Schools project will bring together eight schools, four in Northern Ireland and four in Ireland through a series of project based cross-border and cross-community workshops and activities.	£112,389
Politics In Action 83 University Street, Belfast, Co Antrim, BT7 1HP.	The project aims to amplify youth voices through cross-border cooperation. It will deliver a structured programme focused on critical thinking, leadership and activist skills bringing young people together to foster sustainable connections.	£157,635 OPOF* Funding £10,000
Disability Action NI Portside Business Park, 189 Airport Road West, Belfast, BT3 9ED.	The Civic Initiative project will action a new large scale participatory structure that can give agency back to communities & strengthen links between communities & civic society.	£164,002
NICVA - Transforming Leadership 61 Duncairn Gardens, Belfast, BT15 2GB.	The Transforming Local Leadership (TLL) Pilot Programme aims to support the development of the next generation of community peacebuilding leaders. It will engage 10-15 organisations on a cross-border basis over a 12-month delivery period offering a mix of organisational and individual development support.	£142,560
The John and Pat Hume Foundation 2 Lakeglen Green, Belfast, BT11 8TH.	A regional cross-border project that will develop a strong engagement process to speak to a diverse range of young people, peacemakers, local communities and reconciliation groups. This extensive engagement will lead to the delivery of a Peace Summit event to coincide with the 25th year anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement.	£119,057

*OPOF- Our Peace Our Future

Lead Partner Name/Address	Project Description	Financial Commitment
DERRY CITY AND STRABANE		
North West Cultural Partnership 20-22 Hawkin St, The Fountain, Londonderry, BT48 6RE.	The Cross-Border Cultural Collaboration Programme will offer cultural workshops, talent development, dialogue, and discussion. Providing opportunities for participants from both sides of the border to become involved in performances.	£130,000
NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN		
Community Restorative Justice Newry/Armagh Ballybot House, 28 Cornmarket, Newry, Co Down, BT35 8BG.	The Making Connections, Shaping Futures pilot programme will offer women's activities and support on a cross-border basis. It aims to empower women by implementing locally appropriate interventions to address the full participation of women within their communities.	£161,462
DONEGAL, DERRY/LONDERRY		
AGD Gweedore Bothair An Screaban, Doiri Beaga, Co. Dhun Na Ngall, F92	The application is for a 1-year programme for a partnership project between Amharclann Ghaelige Ghaoth Dobhair, an Irish Language Theatre based in Gweedore, County Donegal and the Waterside Theatre which is based in the Waterside area of Derry/Londonderry. This new partnership has been developed through the Communities in Partnership Programme (CiPP), with the partners designing and developing a cross-border creative arts programme that will connect Gaeltacht communities in Donegal with communities in the Waterside area of Derry/Londonderry with the aim of building cross-border relationships between Gaeltacht, Nationalist and Unionist communities, North and South.	€107,191
AGD Gweedore Bothair An Screaban, Doiri Beaga, Co. Dhun Na Ngall, F92	The additional actions planned fit with the existing IFI approved CiPP project and work programme. These additional actions include: Communities in Partnership – An Overseas Visit to Shared History Sites and Marking 25 Years of the Peace Process – Digital Content Series & Exhibition.	€79,450 Additional Funding
Inishowen Development Partnership Pound Street Business Park Carndonagh, Inishowen Co. Donegal F93 N403	This will take place through Youth Development programme utilising Sports encompassing workshops tournaments and cross-border statutory collaborative management and design. The project seeks to re-establish and to strengthen the existing cross-border and cross-community partnerships built through the delivery of the IFI funded Gateway Soccer (2006) and Football4Peace Programmes (2008-2011).	€203,711

Lead Partner Name/Address	Project Description	Financial Commitment
DONEGAL, DERRY/LONDERRY		
Rathmullen The Way Forward CLG Napoleonic Gun Battery, Kerrs Bay, Rathmullen, Co Donegal, F92 DR97.	This project brings together two partners to explore opportunities for cross-border collaboration between similarly focused regeneration, development and social enterprise groups North and South. The project designed is a Social Innovation Project' called 'Coasts, Hills and Glens – Connecting Communities' which as the name suggests will connect the representatives of villages, rural and coastal communities north and south across the identified communities of interest.	€242,004
Rathmullen The Way Forward CLG Napoleonic Gun Battery, Kerrs Bay, Rathmullen, Co. Donegal, F92 DR97.	This OPOF Initiative project will develop a practical way of building connections between people from different coastal community areas North-South, contributing to peacebuilding, and promoting a great understanding of people from communities North-South. Coastal areas North-South, have a unique heritage, which includes new and multi-generational 'community festivals and events' which should be inclusive, open, accessible and enjoyable for people of all backgrounds.	OPOF* €9,800
SLIGO, LEITRIM, DONEGAL, LOUTH, FERMANAGH, DERRY/LONDERRY		
Beyond the Ball Ballina Chamber of Commerce, Pearse Street, Abbeyhalfquarter, Ballina, Co. Mayo.	Engage 30 young people per area aged 14-19 years in each area in positive activities within their own communities over 30 weeks of the year including football and multi-sports programmes. Engage 10 parents/family members/ volunteers in each community supporting and engaging with the training and leadership elements of the programme, including access to accredited training listed below and undertaking volunteering roles to build experience, shape the programme and build community relationships across Loyalist and Nationalist communities. Direct result is development of local leaders and community role models who can work with the project staff to create real change.	€497,860
Beyond the Ball Ballina Chamber of Commerce, Pearse Street, Abbeyhalfquarter, Ballina, Co. Mayo.	This project will engage 60 young people aged 14-19 years (30 from each side of the border) in positive activities within their own communities and the project will also engage a further 30 parents/family members (15 from each community) in supporting and engaging with training and leadership within the programme. Visits from high profile football players and other influencers. Recruitment via GAA clubs; Comhaltas; Orange Order Youth Lodges and Bands. The project will facilitate cross-community engagement with young people with limited opportunity for contact and develop sustainable relationships at a grass roots and statutory level.	€110,990

* OPOF- Our Peace Our Future

Lead Partner Name/Address	Project Description	Financial Commitment
ARMAGH, CAVAN, FERMANAGH, TYRONE AND MONAGHAN		
Storytellers of Ireland	The project builds on the capacity of Storytellers of Ireland, develops and cements the relationship with the partner group in Northern Ireland. The year-long project is delivering cross-border cross-community storytelling events and training programmes to promote the tradition of oral storytelling and is developing a network of storytellers who can deliver cross-border events into the future leading to increased cross-border activities and reconciliation among border communities.	€89,655
LOUTH		
Louth Comhairle na nOg/Dundalk Youth Centre Roden Place, Dundalk Co. Louth.	The project will develop the relationship between Louth Comhairle na nOg/Dundalk Youth Centre and Newry and Mourne Youth Council/Education Authority Northern Ireland – Southern. The project will deliver a civic engagement project and engage with young people in the Dundalk & Newry border areas and provide them with the opportunity to discuss issues that affect their lives and to feed their views to relevant policy makers in the region.	€86,824

PEACE IMPACT PROGRAMME

The Peace Impact Programme (PIP) is designed to deliver real and positive community transformation through sensitive interventions in communities that have not previously, or have only partially, participated in peacebuilding and reconciliation activities.

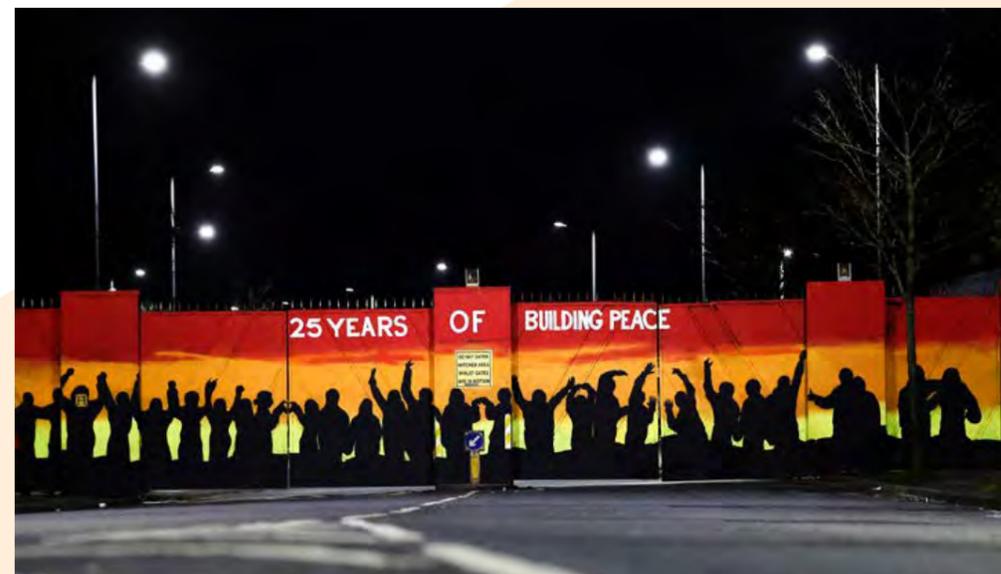


TOP LEFT: PIP projects engage with marginalised communities through their work.
TOP RIGHT: Young people riot against the PSNI during unrest.

These interventions are critical to building a truly integrated, shared and peaceful society. PIP works with communities to build sustainable peace and prosperity in areas suffering from high levels of economic and social deprivation, where there are low levels of engagement in peacebuilding and where the Peace Process has delivered limited benefits.

The programme places particular emphasis on engaging with disaffected and marginalised young people who are vulnerable to recruitment or attack by those opposed to the Peace Process.

The Peace Impact Programme has expanded and intensified efforts to build sustainable peace and prosperity in areas where there have been low levels of engagement in peacebuilding. Projects have developed innovative community-led solutions to address difficult issues linked to the legacy of conflict and many have successfully engaged with young people who are at risk of becoming involved in sectarian or anti-social activity.



ABOVE: Lanark Way in Belfast has been a flashpoint for trouble over the years between marginalised communities. It was recently painted with a mural to mark the anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement.

PIP PROJECTS

During the financial year the IFI committed financial assistance to the following projects:

ANTRIM AND NEWTOWNABBEY

- 1. Dalaradia Cultural Historical Association, Newtownabbey
- 2. NI Alternatives, Carrickfergus

ARMAGH CITY, BANBRIDGE AND CRAIGAVON

- 3. REGENERATE, Portadown

BELFAST CITY

- 4. NI Alternatives, Belfast
- 5. The ACT Initiative, Belfast
- 6. Twaddell and Woodvale Residents' Association (TWRA), Belfast

CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS

- 7. Ulidia Training, Ballymoney

DERRY CITY AND STRABANE

- 8. Creggan Enterprises Ltd (Unheard Voices), Derry
- 9. Galliagh Community Response, Londonderry
- 10. Resolution North West, Londonderry

MID AND EAST ANTRIM

- 11. Factory Community Forum, Larne

MID ULSTER

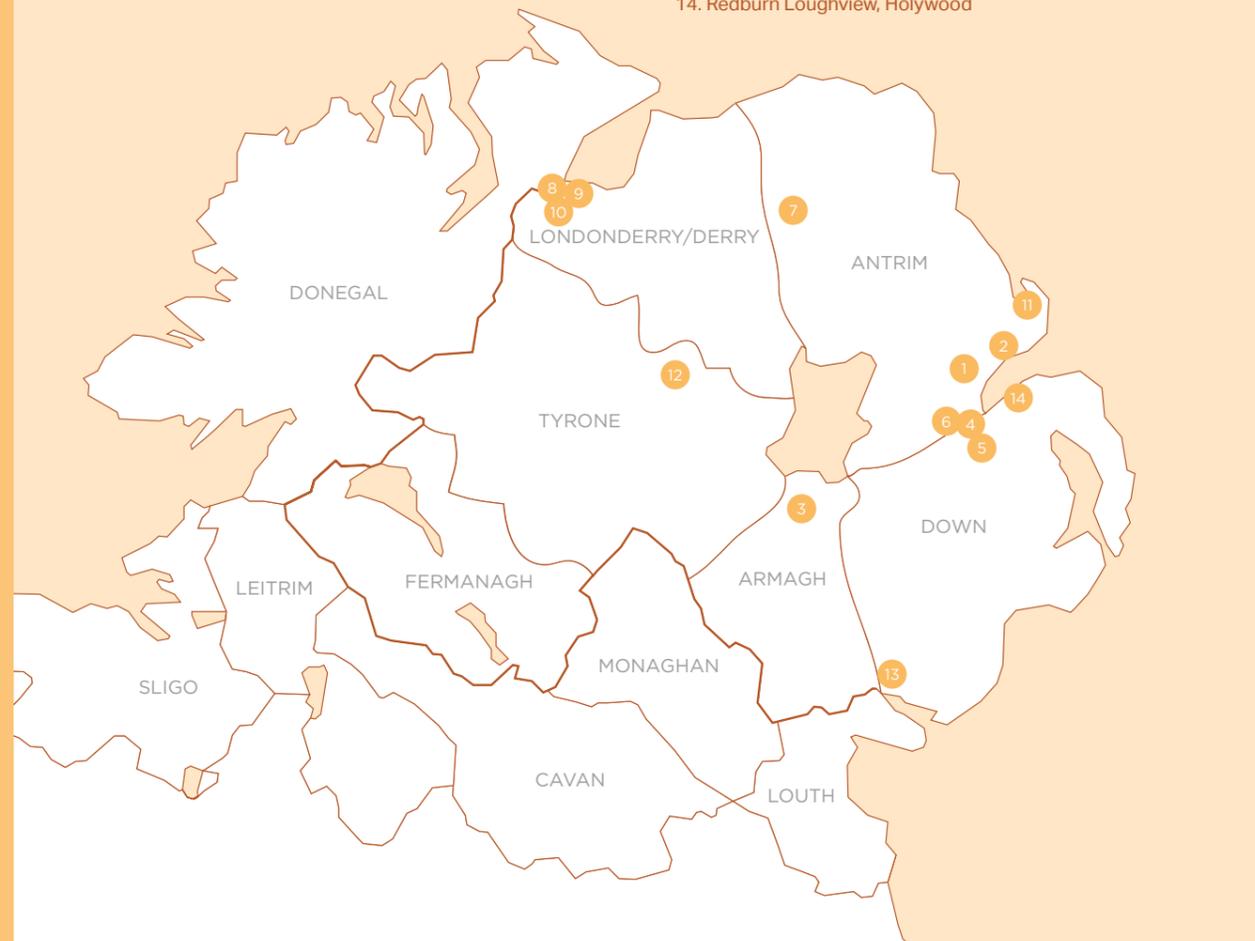
- 12. Sperrin Cultural Awareness Association, Magherafelt

NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN

- 13. Community Restorative Justice – Newry / Armagh

NORTH DOWN

- 14. Redburn Loughview, Holywood



Launched in 2013, The Peace Impact Programme (PIP) has achieved significant success within communities where there has been limited or no previous participation in peacebuilding activities.

In the last reporting year:



OUR AIM: To build sustainable peace and prosperity in areas suffering from high levels of economic and social deprivation, where there are low levels of engagement in peacebuilding and where the Peace Process has delivered limited benefits.



(Note – the numbers presented above are totals, and the number of unique individuals may be lower)

BALLINAMORE AREA COMMUNITY COUNCIL (BETTER TOGETHER)



Establishing entirely new relationships – and strengthening existing ones – at a time when border neighbourhoods have been reeling from the political and economic fallout of the past 12 months has become an important focus for an IFI project based in Ballinamore.

ABOVE: Máirín Martin, Chairperson of Ballinamore Area Community Council Clg pictured speaking at a panel event.



LEFT: Schools involved in the project pictured on a recent trip to Belfast.

Funded through the IFI's Peace Impact Programme (PIP), the Better Together - Níos Fearr Le Chéile' Project which is managed by Ballinamore Area Community Council engage on an inter-generational, cross-community basis with people in Leitrim and Cavan, Tyrone, and Fermanagh.

Michael Mullin, Project Manager believes that the work they do in the area provides a clear focus on how to bring about lasting and positive change for those people and families directly impacted by the legacy of the Troubles.

Whilst the core fundamentals are the same, the Better Together blueprint has been able to react quickly to Brexit, the Northern Ireland Protocol, and more recently the Windsor Framework as these have significantly altered the political landscape. Coupled with growing calls for a border poll vote, Michael admits these events have created tension – and a need for fresh thinking.

"Our message to the public and our local communities is still the same: 'We are better together than apart'," says Michael Mullin, who joined the programme last summer having been impressed by its desire to embrace a sustainable future and shared engagement with all ages and cultures.

"Our focus has always been on cooperation and extolling possible links and partnerships from a cross-border, cross-community perspective. Maybe the emphasis has changed because of Brexit and the political vacuum and anxiety it has created, because no one wants to see a hard border return. An element of distrust has also been created and fresh concerns are being raised.

"With Brexit, there is also a sense now of having to fend for yourself on each side of the border because it has affected people on a social and economic level and that is making life much harder. Another of the big challenges that we face is the rurality of the Better Together project; everyday things like transport, healthcare, unemployment, and infrastructure for broadband do not help."

To address these – whilst aiming to build much greater interest and participation from Protestants in an area traditionally regarded as Republican, assuaging fears, and any decisiveness around the Brexit referendum, and ensuring the views of young people are heard – Better Together has used the support from the IFI to launch a Capacity Building and Social Enterprise Programme.

Other exciting initiatives have focussed on employability, exploring the past and discussing what the future might look like, with participants also given the space to get creative through a writers' project called 'A

Bridge Across Difference'. Arguably one of the most inspiring and meaningful programmes was a Cross-Border Schools' Programme that paved the way for positive engagement between pupils from Ballinamore Community School and Erne Royal Grammar School Enniskillen.

They travelled to Belfast to tour the Peace Walls and to hear first-hand the experience of the conflict from ex-combatants who are now fully committed to educating young people on the power and importance of peace and reconciliation. Then in April, Better Together – Níos Fearr Le Chéile' took a group of forty teenagers to the American Embassy in Dublin to showcase their latest work to Ambassador and politician, Claire D Cronin.

"For the younger people involved in our work, events like the trip to Belfast to Black Mountain Shared Space, which is also an IFI initiative, helped to bring the past to life," explains Michael. "In terms of our ultimate goal, we are committed to working with our partners in both the North and the South, and to demonstrate to the next generation that violence and conflict is not the answer.

"Rather, dialogue and engagement are the pathway to peace and reconciliation. Working with young people I would say I'm optimistic; we are passing on the baton to them and they're certainly intelligent, articulate and most importantly empathetic, so I think we are in a good place in terms of that. But we do have to remain cautious and resolute because the work is far from complete."

A separate Cultural Awareness visit to Derry-Londonderry was organised for group members of Clankelly in County Fermanagh



ABOVE: Participants attend a workshop.

and Ballinamore, meanwhile, where a tour of the Creggan and the city's Peace Bridge was facilitated by Creggan Enterprises. Another highlight of the past twelve months, says Michael, was a special celebration event in Ballinamore; held in November, and attended by Paddy Harte – the Chair of the IFI – along with AMBIT members, it recognised the achievements of the Better Together – Níos Fearr Le Chéile' project over the past two years. This included forming a new working relationship with Clankelly Community Group that is flourishing.

Michael explains: "Originally separate groups that would not normally work together – church groups, GAA clubs and Protestant development associations across Fermanagh – have now come together and formed a collective and it is now working with our groups here in Ballinamore. With further funding we're looking to develop this as much as we possibly can.

"I think because they are in a similar position – they need funding, and they have ideas to develop their communities for the betterment of the people there – it means there is commonality and that has allowed us to strike up a strong friendship and bond with them because of it."

Such initiatives have meant people of different generations with opposing political perspectives and cultural backgrounds can engage, exchange views, explore commonalities and differences –something that would not have been possible without the International Fund for Ireland coming on board, and the Community Council who applied to it for PIP support."

Máirín Martin, the Chairperson of Ballinamore Area Community Council Clg, adds: "It has meant that our Better Together – Níos Fearr Le Chéile project has gone from strength to strength. We have continued to break down barriers and reach out to communities on a cross-border, cross-community basis.

"We have formed firm friendships with members of cross-community groups with whom we would previously not have had the opportunity to do so, and all of this was achieved through multiple community-based initiatives."

THE ACT INITIATIVE



Currently a two-year pilot, Building Cultural Networks (BCN) has been launched to develop a strategic and community-led approach to positive cultural expression in Protestant, Unionist and Loyalist areas, with a particular focus on identifying workable, long-term solutions to the issues surrounding bonfires.

ABOVE: Children from BCN project on a history trip to the walls of Derry/ Londonderry.

Last January, the ACT Initiative secured £900,000 for their Building Cultural Networks (BCN) programme funded by the IFI through the Peace Impact Programme (PIP) – a figure reflected by the geographical reach of a project which takes in 16 areas across six councils, including Belfast; Derry and Strabane; Mid Ulster; Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon; Mid and East Antrim; and Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.

As well as devising a blueprint for safe and legal bonfires that allow people to mark specific periods, or dates on the calendar, BCN is also putting mechanisms in place that ensure pyres have the backing and agreement of landowners, locals, and statutory agencies. With a best practice model as a guide, communities and community leaders can begin to understand the principles around self-regulation to ensure positive outcomes around a subject that is routinely fragmented, contested, and challenging. A strong emphasis is also being placed on engaging with young people actively involved in the erection of bonfires and giving them the opportunity to learn other, new skills to enhance their work prospects.

William Mitchell, Project Director at Action for Community Transformation (ACT) which is the lead partner in Building Cultural Networks says: "This project is quite unique. In my experience, never before has 16 designated communities over such a large remit come together to collaborate, not only with each other, but the designated landowners in those areas.

"It is unheard of and, not only that, a number of additional communities outside the project have bought into the model, including an additional three in Mid Ulster District Council, so we have at least 20 communities all implementing this model which we call Building Cultural Networks, and what it is producing is a richness in relation to cultural expression.

"The images people associate with bonfires – 'This is a fire-fest because there is anti-social behaviour, there is discriminatory material on view, and sectarian language used' – we are trying to dismantle that and in doing so, we believe that we now have a regulatory model that wider society can support."

BCN is assisted by a Strategic Advisory Group that Jim Roddy and Rev Harold Good co-chair. It involves statutory representatives from the emergency services, government departments and agencies, with monthly discussions intended to facilitate an approach that is co-operative, flexible, and pragmatic.



ABOVE: Communities involved attend a music performance examining positive culture.

Jim Roddy – who is also Derry's City Centre Manager – says a reliable and consistent framework can also pave the way for environmentally friendly, culturally enriching, and family-friendly experiences. "It's about making people understand these are cultural celebrations and they have the right to have them and, at the same time, make them understand they must fit in with a normal society,"

"That was recognised very early by the communities we have been working with – they were yearning to fit in with that approach as they understood there were issues around some cultural celebrations. Since the IFI has come on board to fund this project, we have seen massive steps being taken forward to the point where communities and statutory agencies are on the one page. We were on different paths some years ago, but these are moving closer together. We are getting to where we want to be.

"What we want to get out of this is a partnership between the landowners, statutory partners and the community who have been totally disengaged and if we achieve that – and I genuinely believe there are some areas where we have achieved it this year – it will make for a more cohesive approach."

With communities more self-aware of the sensitivities that surround cultural events linked to bonfires – particularly those that have been contentious in the past – the belief is the financial injection for this two-year initiative from the IFI will be money well spent in terms of the added value that it introduces from a cultural, societal, and also economic perspective, as Jim explains.



ABOVE LEFT: BCN is working to make cultural events something for the whole family to enjoy.

"By plotting a model that is sustainable we can show the reasons why it should be funded. It is going to bring a cost saving because if we produce fun-filled community celebrations that don't take masses of police, civil service and council resources then we're going to save the public purse money."

"We do think that come the end of this pilot project we will show, once it's been evaluated, that there is a net cost saving to the exchequer. And there is also an incalculable cost and that is a community that is not in conflict and isn't fighting to uphold its right to hold cultural celebrations but rather can enjoy a cultural celebration that people respect and understand and is not seen as being hate-filled."



ABOVE RIGHT: One of the commissioned beacons in Belfast replicating the originals that lit the way for the Williamites.



LEFT: Young people learn more about the history of the walls of Derry/ Londonderry.

Although the bulk of BCN's work centres around bonfires, it is not exclusively confined to this. Under the 'Education' banner, it designed a series of engagements such as the first-ever St. Patrick's Festival on the Shankill, visits to Clifton Steet Orange Hall, a walking tour of West Belfast, and an open-air seminar at 'The White House' in Newtownabbey where a historian presented a talk on bonfires to almost 250 people. Another first was the commissioning of two beacons for Belfast and Londonderry that replicated the originals which lit the way for the Williamites.

"We have also supported the development, skills and capacity of a host of community groups, wherein eight of the 16 formed new cultural committees to design their activities for the future. This significantly increased the contribution and participation of women, produced participants for a series of training seminars, and led to the delivery of initiatives beyond bonfires such as the re-imaging of two murals as well as a series of community events, to celebrate the coronation of the new King."

"We have also devised a Cultural Education project across the 16 designated areas and began a training programme where agreed individuals devised cultural actions, embarked on events management training, first aid training, and also health and safety training," explains William.

CREGGAN ENTERPRISES LIMITED



Working from Creggan's Rath Mor Centre and supported by IFI's Peace Impact Programme (PIP), Creggan Enterprises Ltd's Community Inclusion Programme (CIP) has engaged with people and neighbourhoods in Derry city and the wider Derry and Strabane District Council.

ABOVE: The Project hosted a Human Rights workshop as part of its delivery.



LEFT: Young people attend a workshop delivered by Creggan Enterprises.

Its involvement with the IFI first started in the 1990s and since then it has introduced change with Peace Impact Programme funding for its pioneering 'Unheard Voices' initiative that concluded in 2019, and Personal Youth Development Programme assistance for its on-going 'Lifhack Project'.

Promoting community cohesion, social and economic democracy underpin its work, and the latest strand of Creggan Enterprises Ltd's engagement has shone a light on marginalised constituencies, including those who continue to be impacted by the actions of state and non-state armed groups. It has also addressed local issues and found ways to bring about grassroots, resident-led and cross-community partnership initiatives in and between historically Catholic, Nationalist, Republican (CNR) and Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist (PUL) areas.

CIP has facilitated this in three ways: supporting areas where there has been a pronounced legacy of the conflict by supporting community and marginalised constituency transition; involving itself in cross-community and multi-cultural engagement; and creating space for community intervention and mediation.

Led by Kevin Hipsley – the manager at Creggan Enterprises Ltd – support has also been extended to those young people who have been negatively affected by the social and political issues of the day. The work has enabled CIP to engage with former combatants and prisoners, and armed groups left behind by the Peace Process, some of whom continue to engage in community justice-style activity.

Regardless of who Kevin and his colleagues end up talking to, the desire to develop and deliver a model specific to a certain community based around peacebuilding, reconciliation, development of skills, improving mental health, raising awareness of the importance of inclusion, human rights and social justice remains the same. "With the support of PIP we have delivered a range of community and multi-cultural events over the last year," he says.

"These include capacity building and training for marginalised individuals and groups; personal or group transition support; employability support; creative and diversionary programming for young people; intergenerational and conflict legacy work; mediation training and transition engagement; targeted mediation; and quiet diplomacy.

"We will continue to provide essential support and services to the Creggan Community, support families in need, and advocate for the most marginalised in our society. We'll continue to promote humanitarian engagement and socio-economic inclusion in all our activities, and work with young people – to unlock their energy, creativity, and open-mindedness – to help them articulate their vision for a shared and prosperous future for their families and their communities."

This approach has generated successful outcomes, although in some cases these are not known to the public due to the sensitivities surrounding them and the politically fractured nature of some areas. There have been tangible achievements, however, including working with young people to establish and build positive relationships; championing the human rights of those families and people pushed to the peripheries; and building the capacity of grassroots community groups and local volunteers.



LEFT: The Project has worked to re-image walls in the Creggan estate.

Inevitably, obstacles still need to be navigated, from political instability and a lack of confidence in policing, to relationships between some PUL and CNR stakeholders being unsettled by Brexit. Underlying issues in relation to poverty, a rise in mental health problems, drug use and a lack of voluntary ethos are further sticking points. Despite this lengthy list, all is not lost.

In reference to the Good Friday Agreement, and what it has delivered for the people of Northern Ireland over the last 25 years, Kevin says; "I am still hopeful that we can get to a place where we have the chance of building a shared and reconciled society but we need strong, inclusive, and effective leadership and we need a generosity of spirit to get us there – something that is sorely lacking right now.



ABOVE: Tánaiste, Micheál Martin TD, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Minister for Defence visits the Project with IFI Chair.



LEFT: Creggan Enterprises team pictured at Bishop's Field park.

"We mustn't be afraid to take risks for peace. Statutory bodies, the two governments, community organisations and third-party funders should be prepared to engage those on the margins and take appropriate risks for peace. Long-term funding – and a focus on developing organisational sustainability – would be hugely beneficial to help organisations deliver strategically and at scale.

Referencing the endeavour of similar-minded people in his area who still champion peace and reconciliation, on top of the contribution that continues to be made by the IFI Kevin adds; "I am inspired by the work that happens on the ground by some community bodies and funders, and civic actors, to help build positive relationships and pragmatic working arrangements and processes on an inter- and intra-community basis, which mitigate some of the weaknesses and failures at a statutory, leadership or governance level. As for the Peace Impact Programme network of groups that is funded by the IFI, it is one such mechanism which does create positive social change and continues to incrementally 'build the peace' in a real and meaningful way that accepts the realities of life within certain communities.

"Creggan Enterprise Ltd has a very long relationship with the IFI, and the IFI in its own right, represents a very significant positive development for the island of Ireland. The IFI's funding of the development of the Ráth Mór Centre in the early 1990s showed strategic, long-term thinking. The support for Creggan Enterprises over the years has been a very positive development overall, providing significant essential community and employment infrastructure and services for the Creggan community.

"CIP itself continues to respond and react to community challenges on a day-to-day and seasonal basis. This may include working to reduce tensions and mitigate potential harm on the ground in the aftermath of a community incident, a contentious policing operation, a parade, or a bonfire."



LEFT: The team re-imagining Bishops Field.

PIP FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

During the financial year the IFI committed financial assistance to the following projects:

Lead Partner Name/Address	Project Description	Financial Commitment
ANTRIM AND NEWTOWNABBEY		
Dalaradia Cultural Historical Association 30, Whitehouse Park, Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim, BT37 9SQ.	This project will deliver a community transformation programme which will address a range of local issues, including, replacing the visible manifestation of paramilitarism, and working towards ending coercive control in the communities.	£256,123
NI Alternatives 22 Bridewell Dr, Carrickfergus, BT38 8JW.	The project helps to reduce tensions, engage more women into peacebuilding & support vulnerable young people. They support community leaders in Greenisland to develop action plans and build capacity locally to tackle the growing presence and threat of paramilitary groups.	£316,776
ARMAGH CITY, BANBRIDGE AND CRAIGAVON		
REGENERATE Address Park, Portadown, Co. Armagh, BT62 3TP.	To deliver a programme of capacity building across five PUL housing estates in Portadown. The work will tackle capacity issues, lack of a cohesive voice and intra and inter community relations.	£261,948 Diversionsary Funding £6,000
BELFAST CITY		
NI Alternatives 137 Agnes St, Belfast, BT13 1GG.	This project marked 25 years of the GFA, NIA in partnership with CRJ Ireland and Boston University to help highlight and give spaces to female voices from grassroots communities.	OPOF* Funding £20,000
The ACT Initiative Building Cultural Networks, 178-180 Shankill Road, Belfast, BT13 2BH.	The overall aim of the project is to develop a strategic and community led approach to positive cultural expression in 16 PUL areas across NI. The project will look at a long-term solution to issues around cultural expression, particularly Bonfires.	£876,573
Twaddell and Woodvale Residents' Association (TWRA) The Cabin, 3 Twaddell Avenue, Belfast, Co. Antrim, BT13 3LE.	The programme will build partnerships at a local level, it will also seek to establish relationships on a cross-community and cross-border basis to ensure that tension factors can be identified early and addressed.	Diversionsary Funding £8,100
CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS		
Ulidia Training Main Street, Ballymoney, Co. Antrim, BT53 6AL.	A conflict transition programme to address issues such as social justice, mediation around threats and feuds and promoting positive engagement in peacebuilding and legacy issues.	£228,867

* OPOF- Our Peace Our Future

Lead Partner Name/Address	Project Description	Financial Commitment
DERRY CITY AND STRABANE		
Creggan Enterprises Ltd (Unheard Voices) Rath Mor Centre, Blighs Lane, Derry, Co. Londonderry, BT48 0LZ.	Quiet diplomacy. Establishment of a Critical Engagement Forum, Increased inclusion of women in peacebuilding. Mediation, negotiation and relationship building with the PUL community.	£76,268
Galliagh Community Response Northside Village Centre, Glengalliagh Rd, Londonderry, BT48 8NN.	This project focuses on three areas of work. Community cohesion, a diversionary programme for youth, and the provision of mediation and restorative practice for the community.	£201,102
Resolution North West 55 - 59 Heron Way, Waterside, Londonderry, Co. Londonderry, BT47 6LE.	Mediation and negotiation, challenging paramilitary control, core identity work, community development and cohesion-building.	£163,105
MID AND EAST ANTRIM		
Factory Community Forum 164 Old Glenarm Road, Larne, Co. Antrim, BT40 1TS.	To deliver a community cohesion project targeting young people vulnerable to criminal elements in the area. Develop an education and employment programme for young people, women and ex combatants in the area.	£200,327 Diversionary Funding £9,735
MID ULSTER		
Sperrin Cultural Awareness Association Union Arcade, Union Road Magherafelt Co Londonderry BT45 5PS	This project will target both those who are involved in or support sectarian, anti-social or violent behaviour or activity as well as continuing to show leadership and support those on the transformation journey. This project celebrates successful grassroots peacebuilding by civil society in the last 25 years, and to look forward to the next 25 years, by exploring how communities can work together to foster peace and reconciliation in a meaningful way.	£261,836 OPOF* Funding £10,000
NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN		
Community Restorative Justice – Newry / Armagh Ballybot House, Cornmarket, Newry, Co. Armagh BT35 8BG	The project will increase community engagement and build positive sustainable peace and prosperity in areas suffering from high levels of economic and social deprivation.	£204,577

*OPOF- Our Peace Our Future

Lead Partner Name/Address	Project Description	Financial Commitment
NORTH DOWN		
Redburn Loughview Community Forum 95b Abbey Ring, Holywood, Co. Down, BT18 9NU.	This project focuses on developing community activism and a mandate for RLCF to help tackle the immense and daunting task in front of them. It's about building a community back from a place of low engagement, marginalisation and paramilitary control.	£197,862

PEACE BARRIERS PROGRAMME

Peace Walls are the most visual remaining symbols of division in Northern Ireland. Today, more than 100 barriers remain mostly in Belfast stretching a distance of 21km.



The Peace Barriers Programme (formerly known as Peace Walls Programme) was launched in January 2012. It focuses on helping interface communities to bring about the conditions that can allow for the removal of Peace Walls.

It provides a range of confidence and relationship building initiatives within and between interface communities to help residents arrive at a position where they feel it is safe and appropriate to discuss

and consider the removal of Peace Walls in their area. The programme is designed for communities that have expressed their willingness and readiness to begin building the levels of trust required before starting the process of engaging with statutory authorities about removing the barriers. The programme, which was developed by the IFI following consultation with all the key stakeholders, is designed to be the first stage in a process leading to the physical removal of barriers. This includes assisting interface communities to lever financial and political investment from statutory authorities for any associated infrastructure and community regeneration needs when the barriers are removed.



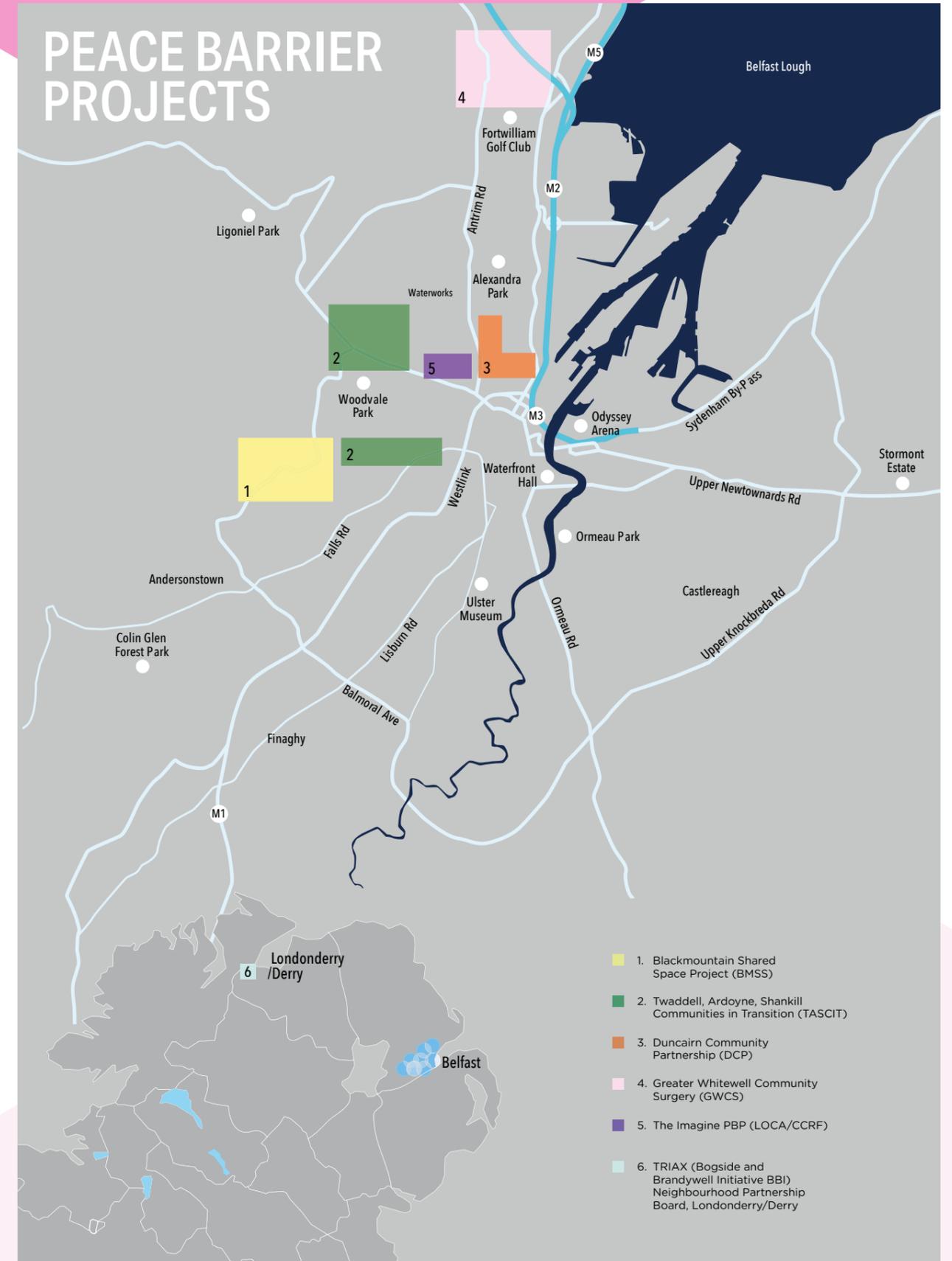
LEFT: Million Brick Peace Wall in West Belfast.

RIGHT: Participants come together regularly as part of PBP projects.

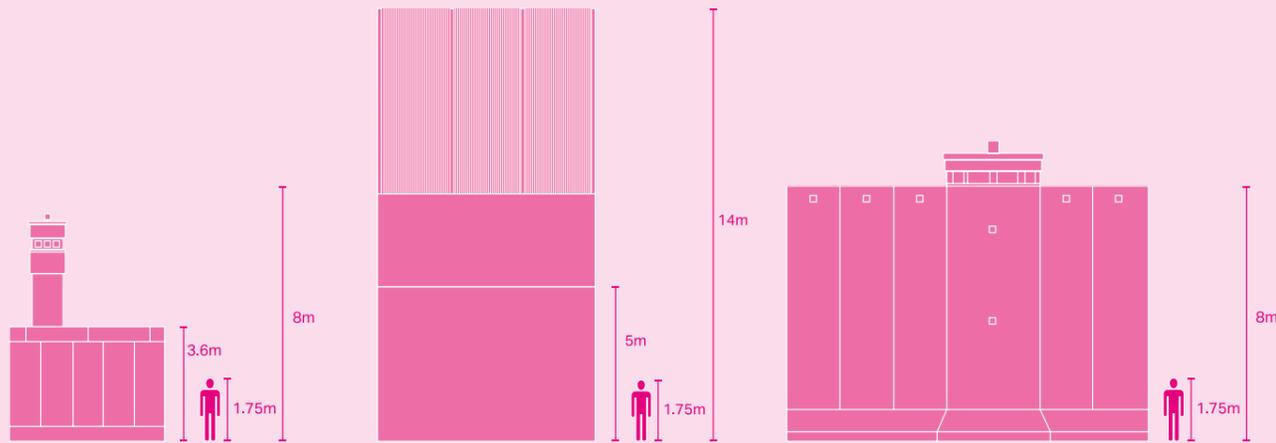




ABOVE: The new peace gate on Flax Street in Belfast has connected communities separated by a fixed barrier for the past 40 years.



The Peace Barriers Programme is breaking new ground in interface areas and assisting communities to imagine life without barriers.



Berlin Wall

Cupar Way, Belfast

Palestine Wall

28 YEARS

54 YEARS

21 YEARS

In the past reporting year our Peace Barriers Programme has delivered:



OUR AIM: To develop and deliver a range of confidence and relationship building interventions within and between communities to help residents reach a position where they feel it is safe and appropriate to proceed with the removal of peace barriers in their area.



(Note – the numbers presented above are totals, and the number of unique individuals may be lower)

TWADDELL ARDOYNE SHANKILL COMMUNITIES IN TRANSITION (TASCIT)



Peace and reconciliation are often slow and sensitive in nature. That has historically been true in so-called flashpoint areas of Belfast where, for decades, people from the Protestant and Catholic communities have led segregated lives because peace barriers kept them apart for their safety.

ABOVE: Columbia Street gate on the Crumlin Road in Belfast was re-opened in 2023.



LEFT: TASCIT participants attend a Challenging Conversations session.

Through the IFI's Peace Barriers Programme (PBP), organisations such as the Twaddell Ardoyne Shankill Communities in Transition (TASCIT) have been able to affect real and lasting change by devising and delivering various confidence and relationship-building initiatives.

It consists of four key partners that are based in areas that have experienced heightened tensions due to the violence of the Troubles, contentious parades, protest marches, anti-social behaviour, and disturbances in the past. These are the North Belfast Interface Network (NBIN) – the current grantee and co-ordinator of the TASCIT partnership – the Lower Shankill Community Association (LCAS), Twaddell Woodvale Residents' Association (TWRA), and finally the Concerned Residents of Upper Ardoyne (CRUA).

Peace Barriers – or interface barriers as they are also often referred to – are a constant reminder of the divisions that still exist in the city, a quarter of a century on from the Belfast Good Friday Agreement being penned. However, by engaging with people on the ground and bringing them along in the peacebuilding journey, their numbers are fewer now than they were in 2013 when TASCIT first started.

TASCIT Programme Manager Rab McCallum says; "The project targets residents in interface areas, or those areas that identify as potential barrier removal or transformation sites. It develops areas of work that allow people to go into the opposite community- the community closest to them which they might not have before.

"And then there may be communities that want to see a wall, or a barrier, removed but the neighbouring community doesn't feel that way, so we have to try and find that commonality because you can't just go along and open barriers or gates at the bidding of one community to the exclusion of the other. That approach does not work. This work is people centred, it is confidence-based, simply because it has not happened before.

"We came along to deal with interface violence, which was almost a nightly occurrence, but we're now at a point if it happens, we're caught on the hop. It's no longer the issue that it was. The Peace Barriers are the most visual aspect of division, we wanted to deal with that, and we are," he adds.

So far, TASCIT, with IFI support, and engagement at local political level, has succeeded in removing the Peace Barrier on Crumlin Road opposite Holy Cross School, opened up the security gates at both Flax Street (Catholic community) and across

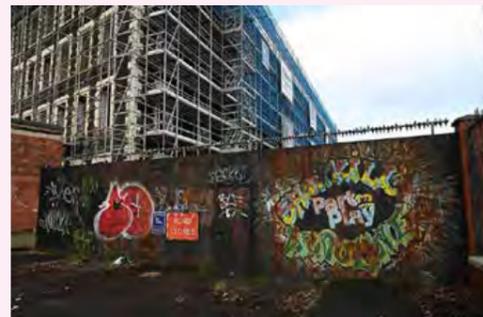
the road at Columbia Street (Protestant community), and secured consensus to discard grilles on the windows of front facing properties on Ardoyne Road.

That leaves the Peace Barrier on Alliance Avenue as the final piece of the physical jigsaw. As Peace Barriers are changed and security gates are pushed apart, it gives rise to stability, regeneration and future prosperity. In the case of Flax Street opening in November 2022 and Columbia Street in June 2023, residents have been granted quick and convenient access to the nearby Hillview Retail Park on the Crumlin Road, now with direct access to both local communities.

The work started with dismantling Peace Barrier infrastructure around a makeshift loyalist protest camp at Twaddell in October 2016. "We are now working on the Ardoyne-Twaddell masterplan, to bring two communities together in an area once known as the most troubled interface in Belfast," says Sean Oliver, TASCIT Peace Advocacy Worker.

"We are now addressing issues collectively we would not have been able to before. As part of Community Relations Week, we organised an event called 'Meet the Neighbours' – it is the second time that we have done it – on an interface site that is quite close to Holy Cross School.

"We have decided it is a shared site, and it was a massive success. Between 400 and 500 residents came along and the symbolism of it wasn't lost on anybody. There was a tremendous atmosphere, there were kids with Rangers shirts and kids in GAA tops – people ended up having a great day."



When metal barriers are surplus to requirements, and gates are opened, having been under lock and key for many decades, the important peacebuilding work TASCIT does enters the next phase, as Rab explains.

"Once this happens, we have an aftercare programme for residents – there is a sense of responsibility. And there is quite often a novelty when gates are being opened as young people are enticed towards them, so we have to ensure that we can cope with those situations.

"At the minute, for us, it is a fairly buoyant period of time and if there are opportunities then we will grasp them. The whole ethos of the project is not about the barriers, and it is not about taking walls down, it is about making life better for the residents who live in those areas where they are at. This is their programme at the end of the day, and they will determine what the outcomes are.

"There will be challenges moving forward, around Brexit and the Northern Ireland Protocol, but if people can be as forthright as they can be it allows issues to be dealt with as we ask about them.

"It may not resolve everything or change people's opinions but at least they will have an understanding or where others are coming from and that makes them feel more comfortable in their skin where they mightn't have done so before. They're more confident, less isolated and less inward looking."



LEFT: Flax street barrier before it was opened.

RIGHT: Participants learn about different cultures and history as part of the Challenging Conversations course.

DUNCAIRN COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP



The work of Duncairn Community Partnership (DCP) takes it to those parts of North Belfast most greatly affected by The Troubles. The passage of time and the Good Friday Agreement may have allowed people space to reflect and communities to rebuild but significant work has still to be done.

ABOVE: The Peace Barrier in Alexandra Park, North Belfast.



LEFT: Kids attend the Pumpkin Patch cross-community consultation event.

RIGHT: All ages take part in the activities and events organised by DCP.

Based on the Antrim Road, DCP has been responsible for bringing about physical and psychological change to North Queen Street, Ponsonby Avenue, and Hillman Court despite the challenges that persist in breaking down negative attitudes, and dealing with security fears at a time when political unrest is growing because of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

With funding obtained through the IFI's Peace Barriers Programme (PBP), its outreach work covers the Catholic, Nationalist, Republican (CNR) New Lodge and North Queen Street, Newington and Duncairn Gardens; the Protestant, Unionist and Loyalist (PUL) Tiger's Bay, Mount Collyer and Shore Road; and the mixed Limestone Road, Alexander Road, and Antrim Road.

But long before any Peace Barriers can be transformed, removed or replaced, DCP must secure consensus from residents who live near, or alongside, these. And even when this is in place, the process takes time to complete, as was the case with Hillman Court.

Harry Smith, Duncairn Community Partnership's Good Relations Officer says; "Not everyone supports removing Peace Barriers and we have to bear that in mind all the time."

"Some of the other issues we have to work around is a lack of an effective multi-agency strategy that can effectively deal with interface criminality and anti-social behaviour issues. Spoilers can also have a disproportionate effect on progress in areas where consent has been obtained. The length of time it takes to make improvements, insufficient funding around structure change or removal, and bureaucracy, also affect progress.

"There is a lot of emphasis on gaining community support but that can't happen until you do the relevant consultation, so when you are talking about gates that, for the last 30-odd years, have kept people safe inside, behind or in front of those gates, when you talk about opening them and closing them, doubts creep in. We are now having the kind of discussions we did not have nine or 10 years ago; that is good and important because community consultation is a core element of our work and is central in order for us to go ahead and make changes at any of our interface sites."

Harry says there's a real appetite for positive movement which is being facilitated by events where people of all ages from Protestant and Catholic neighbourhoods attend. With community buy-in, six more sites have been earmarked for re-imaging to build stronger inter-community relations.

Clear leadership from prominent community figures, consultation involving local politicians, and engagement and diversionary programmes in North Belfast have also paved the way for gates to remain unlocked and even raised the possibility of their opening times being extended. In the past year, DCP has also provided a reassuring presence on the ground, arranged workshops, confidence-building events, and day trips to Dublin Zoo and Ballycastle for the auld Lammass Fair as diversionary activity during times of heightened community tension.

Another priority for Harry and his colleagues is Alexandra Park. "We had 'Peace in the Park 2' in September – a huge celebration of peace in North Belfast and over 2,300 adults and children attended."

"At that event, 100 adults completed questionnaires on the potential for Alexandra Park – which is the host site for most of our activities – to become a shared space.

"It was an opportunity to bring people into the Park and, more importantly, we also used it as an opportunity to erect a marquee and offer a range of holistic therapies for those suffering from conflict related mental health conditions. There is a proportionally higher rate of residents in our communities who suffer from mental health issues because of the conflict, so what we are trying to do is give those people the space to gather their thoughts in relation to the Peace Barriers Programme. We have also held a Pumpkin Patch cross-community consultation event, with upwards of 1,000 kids and adults attending and again people had the chance to give feedback to help steer our work."

However, securing cross-community backing and the green light from statutory agencies are not the only challenges that need to be overcome by DCP. The lack of a sitting Assembly, negative Brexit coverage, and the cost-of-living crisis all add to the end goal of bringing about change. And were it not for the IFI's support over the years, the pace and scale of peacebuilding, and reconciliation, would have been less, says Harry.

"We have been supported by the IFI for nine years, originally through the Peace Walls Programme and now the Peace Barriers Programme which has been an effective mechanism as it empowers residents to get involved in discussions about improving – or removing – peace barriers," he adds.

"It is a long and protracted journey for residents but there is no other partner in Northern Ireland like the IFI who gives you as much support, both financially and resource-wise. The Board has real knowledge of peacebuilding and reconciliation and they have allowed us, in a way, to develop the Peace Barriers Programme so that it works and delivers for the communities we represent.

"In many respects we are very lucky to have that. If we did not have IFI funding, we wouldn't have a Peace Barriers Programme and we could not empower both communities into thinking – and feeling – they have a very valid voice that has to be heard when it comes to peacebuilding."



LEFT: A Halloween event organised for local communities.

IMAGINE



The IMAGINE Peace Barriers Project started back in 2014 to ensure residents' voices would be heard around their future and so too the debate around the Peace Barriers.

ABOVE: Participants take part in an art and craft class.



LEFT: Ladies involved in the project worked with Belfast Exposed to create a unique piece of art to mark International Day of Peace in September 2023.

A partnership involving Lower Oldpark Community Association (LOCA) and Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum (CCRF) with the support of IFI's Peace Barriers Programme (PBP), inter-community contact has steadily improved, and local people are now an intrinsic component of the process.

Imagine's work focuses on six sites in North Belfast and involves people who live in predominantly Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist (PUL) and Catholic, Nationalist, Republican (CNR) communities that tend to be segregated by security fencing that was put in place in direct response to the Troubles.

By partially reducing or removing these altogether, project co-ordinator Claire McGuckin says this measure plays a key role in establishing and then fostering trust, understanding and co-operation.

Significant progress has been made in the past year at three of the six sites in North Belfast – one of the city's most deprived areas – including agreement from the Department of Justice (DoJ) to remove grilles on properties facing Hillview Road and replacing doors and windows with more secure fittings in a number of properties.

Measures to improve the general appearance of the old Fuel Depot in the area, previously the location of an Army observation sangar, have also received support from Belfast City Council, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, and Department of Justice, whilst artist's drawings depicting what the Lower Oldpark and Manor Street areas would look like in a proposed regeneration scheme have now been circulated as part of a public consultation. Should the shared space facility come to fruition, it would comprise a café, soft play and sensory games area for kids, meetings spaces, and retail units. But above all, local people would gain from employment and economic prosperity, both of which are currently lacking, says Claire.

"We have many priorities, but this would be top of the list. We are hoping to remove some sections of the Peace Barrier to create a shared space facility. We have a draft business case as we're looking for financial assistance to buy the land, so it is early stages, but the main thing is we have community buy-in and the relevant statutory agencies are sitting around the same table, so things are moving forward despite the sensitivities that exist around Peace Barriers, which is a taboo topic for some.

"If we want to transform areas and people's lives, and if we are to revitalise and regenerate an area into a safer place, we must be able to



LEFT: Participants attend a workshop.

RIGHT: More artwork that was created in partnership with Belfast Exposed.

come together and talk about hard-line issues like this. For a long time now, people have been living segregated lives and understandably that has led to segregated minds, but if we can make these changes then those mindsets will change too.”

Until the goals identified for each of the six sites have been achieved, the work of knocking down psychological barriers and tackling the issue of segregation between PUL and CNR communities is being achieved through workshops, site visits, talks, presentations, and engagements with other similar peace and reconciliation-focussed groups. Imagine has also been working closely with a group of 25 women aged 30 to 90 from Lower Oldpark and Cliftonville, with numbers rising and activities planned on either side of the peace barriers going up from two days a week to four days.

In September 2023, these ladies unveiled a piece of artwork to commemorate International Day of Peace at Girdwood Community Hub. Following a series of workshops that delved into images from Belfast Exposed’s archives, the PEACE display captured their personal interpretations of the topic.

“Although people might not have the academic side behind them, that doesn’t mean their voices are any less important, so it is about confidence building and providing them with a space where they can come together, create and take advantage of shared opportunities.”

“This allows them to appreciate one another and their cultures. In fact, they no longer

identify as green and orange – it is like a family – and for some of the participants, it is the only adult engagement they have.”

Men from both communities have also begun to talk and now meet regularly, according to LOCA Centre Manager Janice Beggs – something that would have been unheard of previously. Time and resources have also been spent on equipping women with practical skills in budgeting given the current cost-of-living crisis, the importance of good physical and mental health, and the signs to look out for in a coercive relationship – an issue that came to the fore during COVID-19 lockdowns. Programmes to engage with young people in interface areas at a time of public sector cutbacks are also being delivered.

Janice says; “We need more intervention and interaction with them. The cuts that have been made in the education sector are affecting the young in our society and it needs to be sorted as a matter of urgency because more problems will follow if it isn’t. We have had to engage more with kids involved in anti-social behaviour, which means resources are being pulled from somewhere else, so it is all about teaching and educating these kids and giving them hope, so it is up to us and schools to approach these things.

She adds; “And because services are affected, it falls on community workers like us to take on work we are not contracted to do. You are no longer a community worker – you are also a counsellor, you are a safe space, and you are someone who signposts people to the help that they need.”

PBP FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

During the financial year the IFI committed financial assistance to the following projects:

Lead Partner Name/Address	Project Description	Financial Commitment
BELFAST CITY		
Lower Oldpark Community Association & Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum (The Imagine PBP) 9-23 Avoca Street, Belfast, Co. Antrim, BT14 6EN.	The IMAGINE project works on an inter-community basis to promote positive attitudinal change towards Peace Barrier removal or reduction. It also works to regenerate the area and promote shared space initiatives.	£107,874 OPOF Funding £6,670
TASCIT (Ardoyne, Upper Ardoyne, Twaddell, Woodvale and Lower Shankill Partnership) 123 Cliftonville Road, Belfast, Co. Antrim, BT14 6JR.	The TASCIT PBP works to transform Peace Barriers across the many interfaces in this complex area of Upper North Belfast. It promotes inter-community engagement, regeneration and positive life opportunities for residents.	£208,399 OPOF Funding £10,000
Black Mountain Shared Space (BMSS) Quakers Cottage, 295A Ballygomartin Road, Belfast, BT13 7QX.	The Black Mountain Shared Space PBP’s vision is the positive regeneration of the Black Mountain area through provision of Shared Space initiatives with Peace Barrier transformation for residents most impacted by the conflict.	Additional Funding £26,700 Diversionsary Funding £10,000
Duncairn Community Partnership 290 Antrim Road, Belfast, Co. Antrim, BT15 5AA.	Duncairn Community Partnership promotes inter-community engagement between residents across a notorious interface and builds community confidence towards agreement for Peace Barrier removal or reduction.	Additional Funding £10,000 Diversionsary Funding £11,780
DERRY CITY AND STRABANE		
Bogside and Brandywell Initiative - BBI) Triax Neighbourhood Partnership Board 128 Lecky Road, Derry/Londonderry, Co. Derry, BT48 6NP.	The BBI PBP delivers a broad range of intra- and inter-community engagement programmes for adults and young people across their interface area. This promotes understanding and breaking down negative perceptions of the ‘other’ and has enabled positive change to some Peace Barriers with ongoing consultations to reduce/remove others.	OPOF Funding £15,000

* OPOF- Our Peace Our Future

PERSONAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Personal Youth Development Programme (PYDP) was launched in late 2015 within the Fund's Community Consolidation – Peace Consolidation 2016 – 2020 Strategy.



LEFT: Young people deliver a performance as part of their PYDP experience.



RIGHT: The Programme allows young people to learn valuable skills.

The programme aims to help at risk young people build and develop life skills that foster good relations, build confidence and resilience and make them more employable. The programme is unique in the way it engages and sustains contact with participants.

Each PYDP project builds enduring relationships with young people and establishes highly personalised development plans tailored to the needs of the individual. The tiered nature of the programme and continued contact with project coordinators – even after completion of initial level – means participants can progress or reconnect

with the programme at different levels as circumstances change. In this sense, the programme adapts and adjusts to the needs of the individual providing personal guidance and encouragement as they develop. The PYDP seeks to connect young people aged 16-25 to personalised learning, skills and employment opportunities with a central focus on good relations and preparing young people for the world of work. It is interested in engaging young people that are vulnerable to polarisation/recruitment to organisations opposed to the Peace Process and face barriers to participation in mainstream provision.

The Personal Youth Development Programme (PYDP) enables each participant to take control of their own personal development through a multitiered approach that offers significant individualised support with community, social and economic elements.



LEFT: A PYDP participant attends a training workshop.



RIGHT: All projects work to help build confidence and make young people more employable.

PYDP PROJECTS

During the financial year the IFI committed financial assistance to the following projects:

ARMAGH CITY, BANBRIDGE AND CRAIGAVON

1. Edgarstown Residents Association – Evolve Programme, Portadown

BELFAST CITY

2. Catalyst, Belfast
3. Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum - YOLO (Youth Opportunities Learning Outcomes), Belfast
4. Greater Shankill Partnership, Belfast
5. NIA & An Droichead, Belfast
6. Springboard Opportunities Ltd - Directions, Belfast

CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS

7. Roe Valley Residents Association - Building Brighter Futures, Limavady
8. Causeway Rural & Urban Network - BRAKE, Coleraine

DERRY CITY AND STRABANE

9. Creggan Enterprises Ltd – Lifehack, Derry
10. Have your Tomorrows (HURT) – Right Here Right Now, Derry
11. St Columbs Park Reconciliation Trust, Derry
12. Strabane AYE - Strabane Youth Support Programme, Strabane

FERMANAGH AND OMAGH

13. Fermanagh Sports & Cultural Awareness Association, Ballinamallard

MID ULSTER

14. Galbally Youth & Community Association, Galbally
15. Maghera Cross Community Link - Link Youth Achievement Project, Maghera

NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN

16. Clanrye Downpatrick, Newry/Downpatrick

ARDEE, MID LOUTH

17. Ardee District and Community Trust, Ardee

DROGHEDA

18. Connect Family Resource Centre, Drogheda
19. Foróige Drogheda, Drogheda

DONEGAL

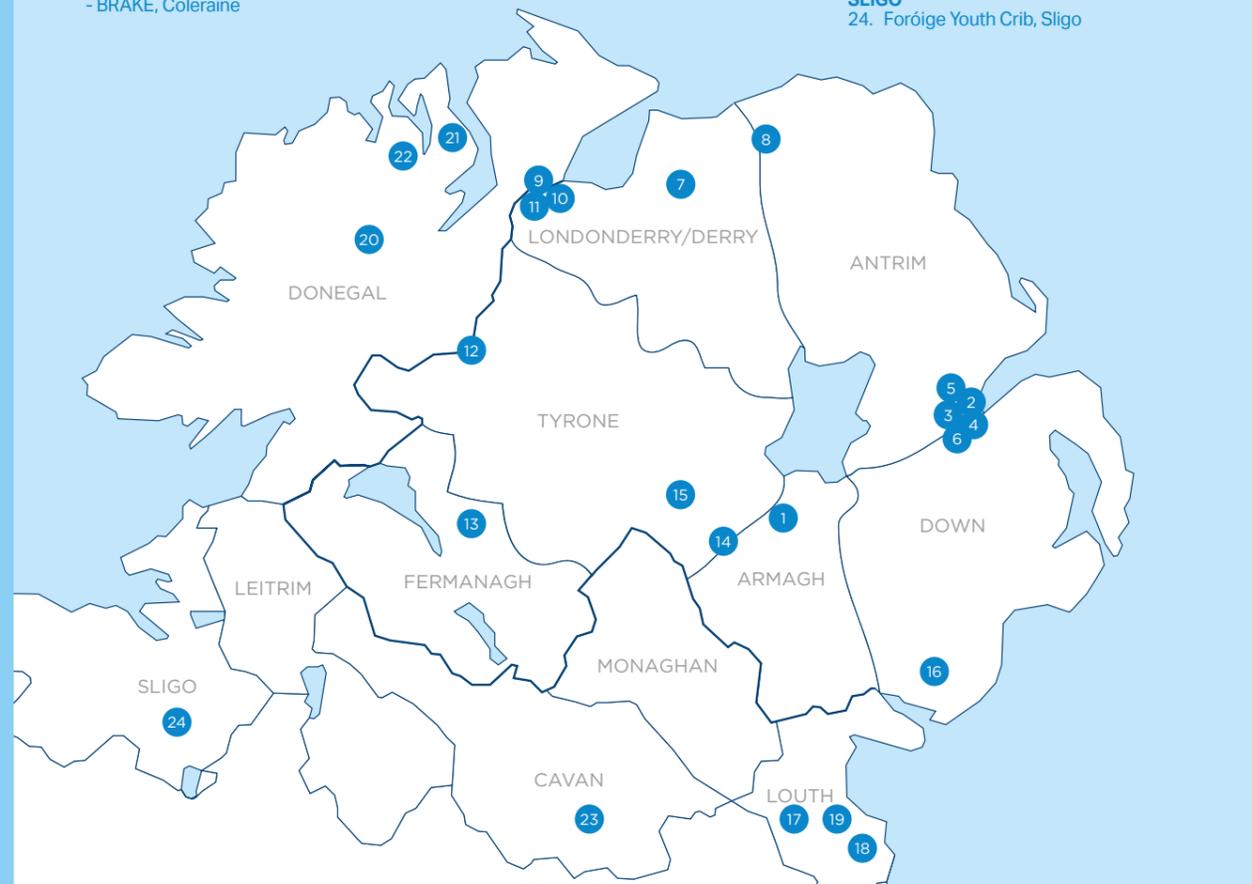
20. Donegal Youth Services, Letterkenny
21. Bundoran Community Development CLG, Bundoran
22. Lifford Clonleigh Resource Centre & Include Youth, Lifford

CAVAN

23. Foróige Cavan, Cavan

SLIGO

24. Foróige Youth Crib, Sligo



Launched in November 2015, the Personal Youth Development Programme (PYDP) is designed to help young people build and develop life skills that foster good relations, build confidence and resilience and make them more employable.

In the last reporting year:



469
young people
have participated



164
have progressed
to education
and training

753
accreditations
achieved



41
projects funded
by the programme



OUR AIM: Helping at risk young people build and develop life skills that foster good relations, build confidence and resilience and make them more employable.



273
completed good
relations training



289
receiving employment
related training



6
have secured
apprenticeships



163
have secured
employment

MAGHERA CROSS COMMUNITY LINK



Underpinning Maghera Cross Community Link (MCCL) is a safe, stable and nurturing environment that allows users of the facility on St Lurach's Road in the town, to develop both physically and emotionally.

ABOVE: Young people attend a wellbeing workshop.



LEFT: MCCL provides a range of activities to help improve self-esteem and confidence.

Also fundamental to this development at MCCL is an open-door policy to those people from the Protestant and Catholic communities, particularly during periods of heightened political tension.

Since 2017, Centre Manager Heather Boyd, through the IFI's Personal Youth Development Programme (PYDP), has been transforming the lives of 16- to 25-year-olds vulnerable to paramilitary recruitment or substance abuse, have left education early or are known to the criminal justice system. In collaboration with Mid Ulster Council, the Probation Board, PSNI and statutory agencies, these efforts have secured 'Queen's Award for Voluntary Service' recognition.

Heather's most recent work with her fourth cohort started in April 2023 and will run over a 21-month period. During this, there will be the roll out of Level 1 Good Relations and Personal Development, Level 2 Skills and Social Development and Level 3 Education and Employability Development. She's targeting at risk participants from Maghera and Magherafelt, Swatragh, Upperlands, Cullnady, Gulladuff and also Tobermore, with interest in the scheme leading to 22 people eventually signing up. One of the reasons, she says, is a

greater awareness around mental health and people seeking mentorship.

Heather explains "Mental health issues are very common within the Maghera and surrounding areas, with many young people suffering with depression, anxiety, self-esteem and confidence issues. There have been several suicides within the local area, showing the need for more mental health support. The Personal Youth Development Programme (PYDP) in Maghera has been working with a mental health counsellor on a tailored programme which best meets their needs, focusing on issues including self-harm, alcohol and drug addiction, and bereavement.

"Substance misuse and addiction is a key issue within the local community and takes many forms, including drugs and alcohol, and more recently vaping products. We have seen first-hand the impact addiction has on the individuals and their families. MCCL has completed several positive mental health sessions that focused on addiction, and the group has also engaged in a workshop focusing on the dangers of vaping products."

As well as providing a safe and welcoming environment to meet, engage and build relationships with people from Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist or Catholic, Nationalist, Republican communities, participants have the chance to acquire new skills and obtain



ABOVE: The project has built up positive relationships with a number of partners including the PSNI.

qualifications to boost their career prospects. To maximise this, tailored support plans and accredited personal development is dovetailed with vocational programmes, work placements, and local volunteering opportunities that takes participants into the very heart of the communities they are known – and belong – to.

Heather adds; "The group have gained five new qualifications. Manual Handling Awareness, Level 2 in Food Safety, Level 3 in Emergency First Aid at Work, OCN Level 2 in Good Relations and Level 2 in Mental Health First Aid. The group are currently completing Level 1 Managing Risks and Level 2 Personal Development.

"Alongside this, the group has taken part in a range of non-accredited training in teambuilding, cookery, one-to-one mentoring, mental health awareness and caring for the centre's allotments as well as physical activity and volunteering. In terms of non-accredited training and workshops, the group will be completing money management, car mechanic and cookery, CV building, interview skills, job search, career taster sessions and work placements on top of drug and alcohol awareness training. Since last April, it is evident each individual has improved greatly, whether that be their qualification levels, their personal qualities, or their skill level.

"And through the PYDP, the young people have explored their own identity, as well as other cultures and religions, which has helped to positively change their attitudes surrounding religion. We are extremely proud of each young person who work hard each

week to improve their lives, increasing their employment prospects. Like our previous PYDP projects, the ultimate goal is for the young people to gain employment – or to go into further educational training – all whilst improving them as individuals to be able to contribute to society in a positive manner.

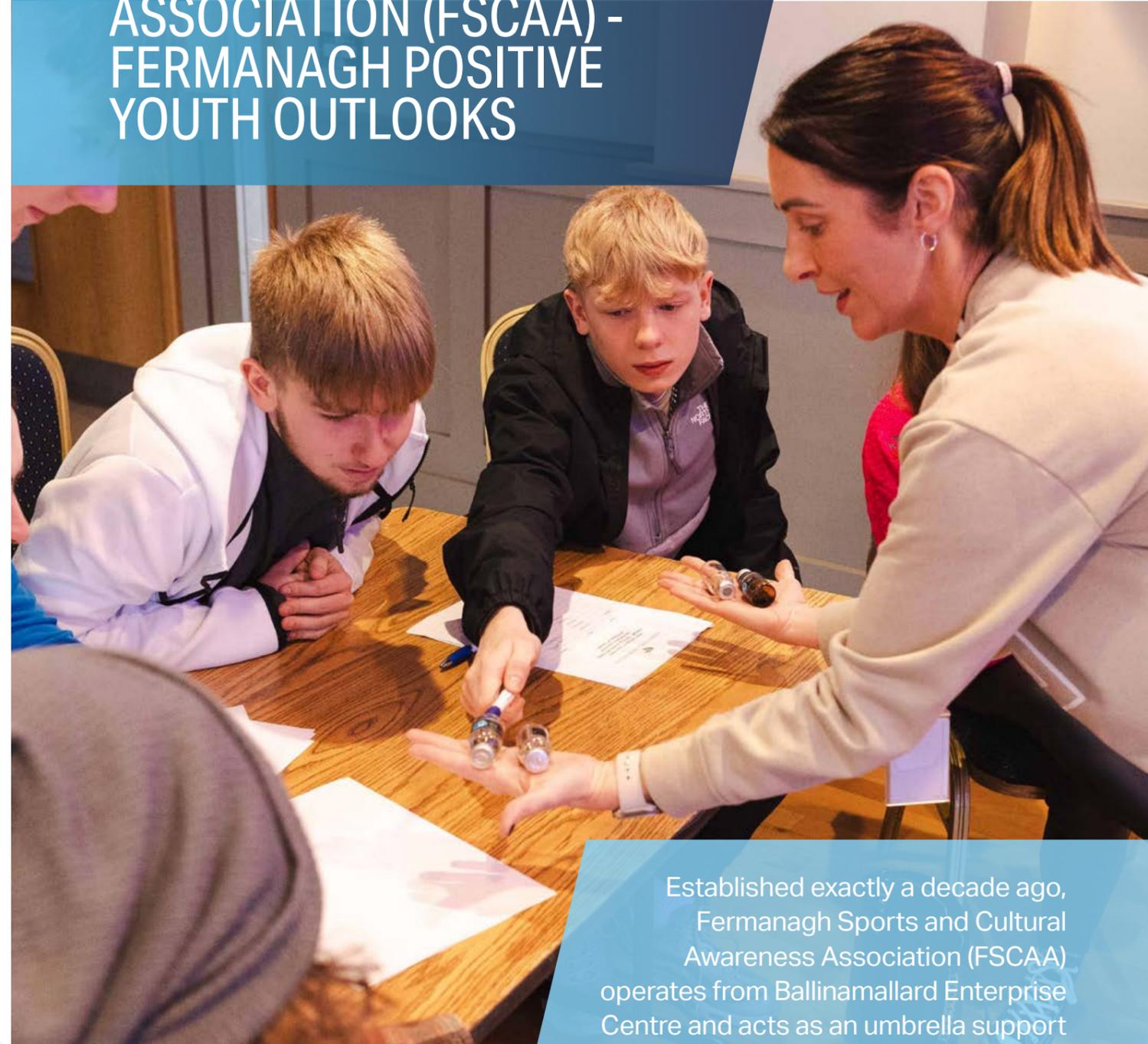
Although Heather admits much of the work carried out at MCCL would not have been possible without the Good Friday Agreement, she feels it has not delivered the peace dividend of jobs and prosperity other parts of the province have enjoyed – and that creates another problem.

"Without the Good Friday Agreement, none of the grassroots dialogue and reconciliation programmes would have commenced which was, and will continue to be, one of the main ethos of engagement that we endure under the IFI's support, that is developing life skills, good relations, and confidence among our young people in a shared environment who face barriers to participate through mainstream engagement.

"The GFA was to bring more jobs and opportunities to our communities but the geographical area in which we operate is now facing higher levels of poverty and the political fallout from Brexit and the collapse of Stormont has given rise to a sense of uncertainty on what the outcomes will be and what the future holds. But Maghera Cross Community Link will continue to make milestone changes within our local community and adapt where necessary to ensure that all sections of society can live side-by-side free from the violence of the past.

"We are filled with hope and expectation that the links we have made, in particular over the past 10 years within the community sector, will help change the perception on how we as a society view different perspectives. Unfortunately, at times, peace can be fragile and undoubtedly, we have had many difficulties, but engaging locally and working together, we have helped break down barriers on such issues."

FERMANAGH SPORTS AND CULTURAL AWARENESS ASSOCIATION (FSCAA) - Fermanagh Positive Youth Outlooks



Established exactly a decade ago, Fermanagh Sports and Cultural Awareness Association (FSCAA) operates from Ballinamallard Enterprise Centre and acts as an umbrella support service for a total of 15 groups from the Protestant, Unionist, and Loyalist (PUL) communities in County Fermanagh.

ABOVE: Young people from the project attend a workshop.

Funded since 2017 through the IFI's Personal Youth Development Programme (PYDP), the project ran by FSCAA called 'Fermanagh Positive Youth Outlooks', provides access to training and accredited learning to those living in the Ballinamallard and Maguiresbridge, Kesh, Tempo and Brookeborough areas to help increase their skillset, and further their personal development.

These areas have been identified by Fermanagh Positive Youth Outlooks youth worker Alexandra Elliott and co-ordinator John Quinn for numerous reasons, with income deprivation, unemployment and proximity to services high amongst them – factors that have been known to contribute to drug or alcohol misuse, poor mental health, criminality, anti-social behaviour and, longer-term, a cycle of benefit dependency due to young people aged 16 to 25 having dropped out of school with no formal qualifications.

"To ensure each participant gets the most out of the programme an individual employability and development action plan is created for them," says Alexandra.

"We provide accredited training in Essential Skills such as literacy and numeracy, first aid, and Peace and Reconciliation as well as workshops covering mental health and wellbeing, nutrition, cooking, and the benefits of exercise.



ABOVE: Young people also give back to the community and this year they took part in litter picking.



ABOVE: Fun, team building activities like go karting are also an important part of project delivery.

"In the second year of the programme there was a greater focus on getting back into employment by looking at education and training on top of visits to local businesses. We also invite inspirational people along to address the group – maybe someone like themselves who was struggling to get employment, who wasn't sure where they were going, or how they could make a go of it before they had success, and they can make quite the impact because they are proof change is possible."

To date, over 70 participants have been supported by the Project, with almost 20 of these finding work because of it, and since April 2021, 60 accredited qualifications have been achieved.

"This is huge when you remember they came to us with no qualifications to their name," continues Alexandra.

"We had a celebration event for our most recent past participants, and it was a great way to mark their achievements – but what represents success varies from one person to the next. For some of them, just completing the programme and getting up every morning and coming to it was a big thing. For others, it was getting both parts of their driving test or receiving accredited training.

"One of the girls wants to be a nurse, so she has gone on to college to study for an Open Award Certificate, and then one guy has produced his own book of poetry and is now writing his second. It is nice to be able to give them a chance, a chance they maybe felt they did not have before or did not use at the time,

to feel part of their community and society, and to contribute positively."

And that is before considering the inspirational story of past participant Bethany Fleming – a 20-year-old who was presented with the Young Shining Star Award in recognition of her advocacy and campaign work during Homeless Awareness Week in the Enniskillen and surrounding area.

Originally, the Project's work was heavily PUL-focussed due to the Ballinamallard area being regarded as a 'safe area' for Protestants and the security forces during the Troubles. However, as its profile steadily grows, those who have had minimal engagement with their peers from the other side of the religious divide are becoming more and more involved. From its current cohort of 13, eight are from a Catholic, Nationalist or Republican background – a transition that's also been facilitated by team building exercises involving other Personal Youth Development Programme groups such as Galbally Youth and Community Association in Dungannon and the Clanrye Group in Newry city.

John says; "This is a big achievement for us because in the early days we would have struggled to attract young people from a Catholic background into the Programme. It was difficult for us to know if it was due to the fact it was based in Ballinamallard, but the picture is very different now.

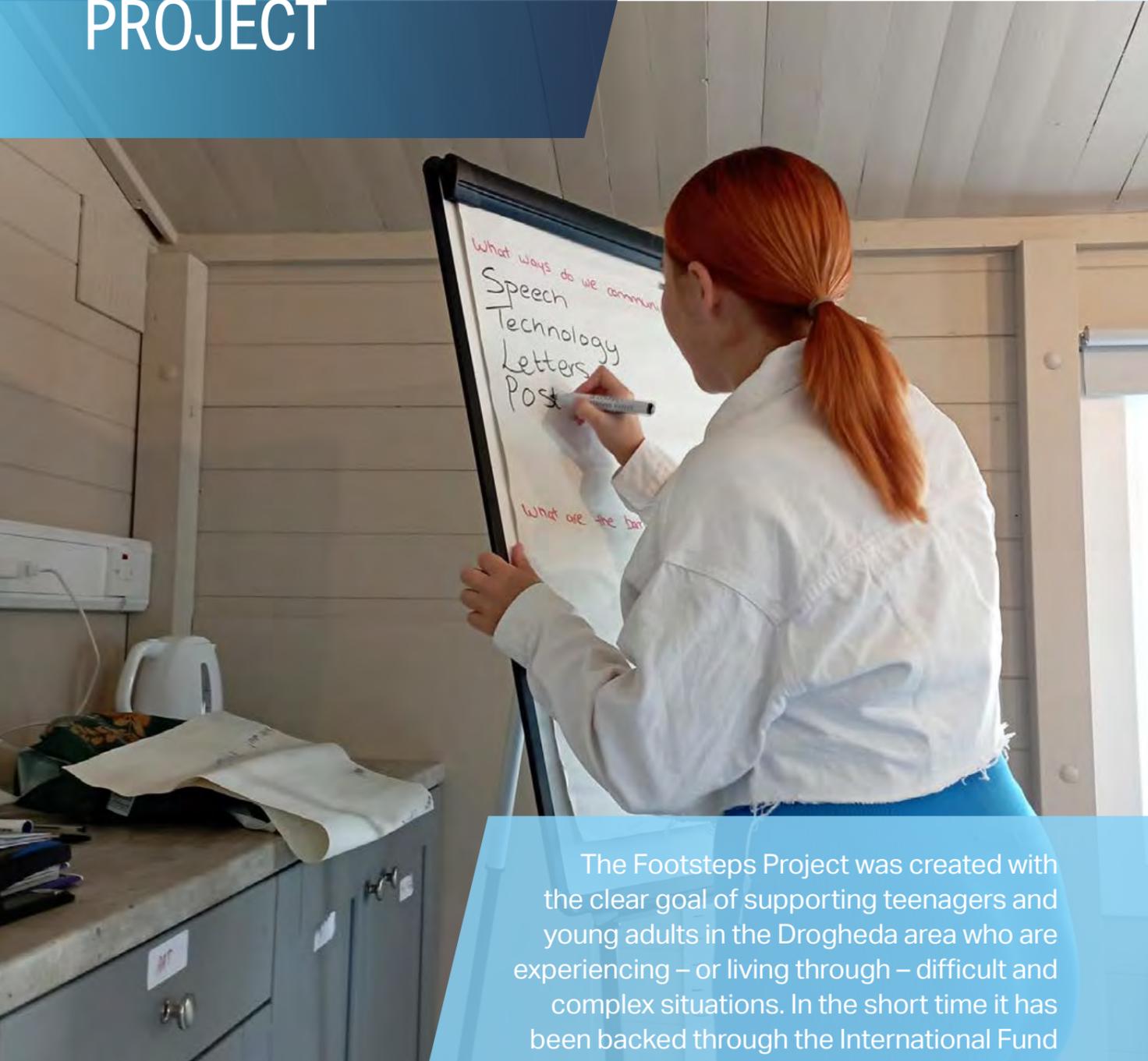
"Over the last 10 or 15 years, there are more people from a Catholic background now living in the village, there are more ethnic minorities here now, so yes, things have changed and people in the community are aware our young people is a mixed group, but they are happy to work with them.

"I think there is an acceptance now amongst young people that no matter who you are or where you are from, the same issues can affect you. We have seen a big improvement in community relations but there is still a lot to be done and the support from the IFI has and will allow us to do that, especially due to other funding opportunities being fewer as Stormont is not functioning."



ABOVE: Youth worker Alexandra Elliott (left) and IFI Board Member Peter Osborne (right) pictured with participants at a celebration event earlier this year.

FOOTSTEPS PROJECT



The Footsteps Project was created with the clear goal of supporting teenagers and young adults in the Drogheda area who are experiencing – or living through – difficult and complex situations. In the short time it has been backed through the International Fund for Ireland’s Personal Youth Development Programme, it has helped to transform the lives of many people aged 16-24 years.

ABOVE: One of the many workshops delivered by the Footsteps project.



LEFT: Young people visited Belfast earlier this year to learn more about history from both sides of the community.

One of the areas it targets is Moneymore – a townland that lies to the north of Drogheda. A large percentage of the youth that presently live there lack trust in statutory organisations which often gives rise to them being removed from school, experiencing homelessness or criminality, or even the judicial system. Other common pitfalls include drug or alcohol abuse or battling mental health.

Project co-ordinator Susan Breen feels the best way to overcome – or avoid – these challenges in the first place is to provide opportunities for the vulnerable or disadvantaged, to develop lasting skills and attributes that equips them with certified qualifications to increase their employability. Doing this ensures their voice on matters that are important to them can be heard; it gives them a sense of belonging in their community; and it allows them to reach their potential, she says.

Through agency and self-referrals, a total of sixteen people are currently availing of the services offered by the Footsteps Project. One strand is occupational support that enables

participants to build and tailor their Curriculum Vitae accordingly and also receive guidance with job applications.

In the case of six members from the current Footsteps Project cohort, they have been undertaking a Leadership for Life qualification through Galway University; part of this has required them to plan and deliver a Halloween event the entire Moneymore community could enjoy. Interestingly, for some participants, they are the first from their families to attend third level education.

“The six of them are registered community leaders so they get to go to different training such as how they go about setting up a youth group because some of them want to do that for the other younger kids in this area. It gives them access to more opportunities and also funding,” says Susan.

“Some are involved in Community Employment Schemes and Focus on Future courses and others are currently at Drogheda Institute for Further Education and then we have three or four who are really affected by social anxiety, so they are one-to-one because they won’t come into groups. In the case of those people, we work at their pace in order to achieve the best possible outcomes.

“COVID has compounded the difficulties. We see more people suffering from social anxiety

now and that is definitely down to that. Before it happened, we would have done a lot of group work before going back to one-to-ones and then slowly trying to get back to group work, but that has required sending some to counselling – or different aspects of training – in order to help them.”

One external factor that continues to present problems is the legacy of the ‘Drogheda feud’. Even though those gangs responsible for the deaths of four individuals have since been dismantled by Gardai, the legacy of their criminality lives on despite public reassurances. For many, there is still a real sense that trouble, or the threat of trouble, is never too far away and is why the positive change the Footsteps Project has delivered in a short time was highlighted in a government report entitled ‘Drogheda: Creating a Bridge to a Better Future’. To build on this good work Susan argues the benefits that come from cross-community and good relations work must be highlighted more.

“Greater collaboration with other services – particularly on the far side of town – to help with community development is something that I would like to see more of in the future,” she says. “There is a river flowing through the town and although to many that might not seem such a big thing, there are people on this side who would never think of crossing over to estates on the other side, and vice versa, because both sides call one another the ‘Far side’ – but we are getting there.

“We are trying to get our young people on the other side of the river to do things with the young people on this side and show them that although they are from two opposite sides, they are not actually that different. If we need inspiration for overcoming issues in the community then the Good Friday Agreement is a good reference point: there are challenges – there will always be challenges – but I think it clearly shows just how effective a collaborative approach is and can be.”

But Susan does not believe collaboration should be exclusively confined to those areas Footsteps Project participants live. “If we are to achieve a better understanding amongst our young people around the different cultures and traditions, then we have to try and look at doing that,” she says.

“We had the opportunity over the summer to bring our young people up north and I could see how excited they were, but there is still a lot of learning to be done. We visited Catholic areas and Protestant areas, and they could not wait to get out of the Protestant areas because it was around the marching season, and it was flooded with flags – it made them feel uncomfortable – so I think a more joined-up approach is called for. We do hope to link up with a youth group in the north moving forward to make our young people realise that there are two sides to every story.”



LEFT: Participants celebrating their Footsteps journey.

PYDP FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

During the financial year the IFI committed financial assistance to the following projects:

PYDP Projects will deliver all or some of the following;

- Level 1 Good Relations and Personal Development
- Level 2 Skills and Social Development
- Level 3 Education and Employability Development
- Level 4 Community Champions over a two-year period

Lead Partner Name/Address	Project Description	Financial Commitment
ARMAGH CITY, BANBRIDGE AND CRAIGAVON		
Edgarstown Residents Association – Evolve Programme 18/19 Union Street, Portadown, Co. Armagh, BT62 4AD.	Changing the Landscape will provide further support to a cohort of 15 at risk young people through one-to-one mentoring support, individual and group activities to help them increase their employment opportunities and/or progress onto further educational courses.	£112,133
BELFAST CITY		
Catalyst The Innovation Centre, Queen’s Road, Queen’s Island, Belfast, BT3 9DT.	The StrYve project will deliver Level 4 Advanced Personal Development, Training and Employability Support Programme for up to 30 young people over a 21-month period.	£352,189
Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum - YOLO (Youth Opportunities Learning Outcomes) 185 Cliftonpark Avenue, Belfast, Co. Antrim, BT14 6DT.	To work with 15 at risk young people to help further develop their personal development and employability skills through intense one-to-one mentoring support and group training activities.	£169,437
Greater Shankill Partnership 331-333 Shankill Road, Belfast, BT13 3AA.	The Wall2Wall project will recruit 16 young people from targeted areas of Belfast. It will deliver Good Relations and Personal Development activities, Skills and Social Development training and an Overseas Study Visit.	£123,148
NIA & An Droichead 33 Donegal Pass, Belfast, BT7 1DQ.	The PLUS project will deliver Level 1 Good Relations and Personal Development, Level 2 Skills and Social Development, Level 3 Education and Employability Development and Level 4 Community Champions to two cohorts of 12 people.	OPOF* Funding £15,000
Springboard Opportunities Ltd - Directions Lourene House, 112-114 Donegall Street, Belfast, BT1 2GX.	The project plans to recruit 15 at risk young people primarily targeting areas suffering high levels of economic and social deprivation and affected by sectarianism, racism, division and/or conflict.	£144,278 OPOF* Funding £14,991
CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS		
Roe Valley Residents Association - Building Brighter Futures 13-14 Keady Way, Limavady, Co. Derry, BT49 0AU.	The Project will recruit 15 young people not in education, employment or training, who are vulnerable to paramilitary recruitment and/or been in, or close to, the criminal justice system. It will deliver levels 1 to 3.	£187,395

* OPOF- Our Peace Our Future

Lead Partner Name/Address	Project Description	Financial Commitment
CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS		
Causeway Rural & Urban Network - BRAKE 1 Brook Street, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, BT52 1PW.	The project will work with 15 at risk young people who are unemployed and not engaged in training or education. It will deliver Levels 1 to 3.	£182,382
DERRY CITY AND STRABANE		
Creggan Enterprises Ltd – Lifehack Rath Mor Centre, Blighs Lane, Derry, Co. Londonderry, BT48 0LZ.	The Lifehack project will continue to deliver Levels 1 to 3 (for a further year, two in total) to 15 young people many of whom are engaging at a significant level of involvement with non-state armed groups or in the radar of paramilitary groupings.	£171,427
Have your Tomorrows (HURT) – Right Here Right Now Clarendon Street, Derry, Co. Londonderry, BT48 7ET.	This project 'Right Here Right Now' will continue to deliver Levels 1 to 3 and plans to recruit 15 young people who are likely to be known to the criminal justice system and not in employment, education or training.	£164,833
St Columbs Park Reconciliation Trust Limavady Road, Derry, Co Londonderry BT47 6JY	The Project will recruit 15 young people not in education, employment or training, who are vulnerable to paramilitary recruitment and/or been in, or close to, the criminal justice system. It will deliver Levels 1 to 3.	£183,875 OPOF* Funding £14,426
Strabane AYE - Strabane Youth Support Programme Patrick Street, Strabane, Co. Tyrone, BT82 8DQ.	The Project will work with 15 disengaged and marginalised young people most at risk from criminalisation or punishment from armed groups, vulnerable to recruitment to armed organisations and with little or no qualifications. It will deliver Levels 1 to 3.	£147,663
FERMANAGH AND OMAGH		
Fermanagh Sports & Cultural Awareness Association Main Street, Ballinamallard, Co. Fermanagh, BT94 2FY.	The Project will recruit 15 young people not in education, employment or training, who are vulnerable to paramilitary recruitment and/or been in, or close to, the criminal justice system. It will deliver Levels 1 to 3.	£139,679
MID ULSTER		
Galbally Youth & Community Association 36 Lurgylea Road, Galbally, Co. Tyrone, BT70 2NX.	The Game Changer project will work with 15 at risk young people, hard to reach, have been involved, or close to the criminal justice system, marginalised from society or not in education, employment or training. It will deliver Levels 1 to 3.	£182,974
Maghera Cross Community Link - Link Youth Achievement Project St Lurach Road, Maghera, Co. Londonderry, BT46 5EJ.	The Project will recruit 15 young people not in education, employment or training, who are vulnerable to paramilitary recruitment and/or been in, or close to, the criminal justice system. It will deliver Levels 1 to 3.	£157,278

* OPOF- Our Peace Our Future

Lead Partner Name/Address	Project Description	Financial Commitment
NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN		
Clanrye Downpatrick Slieve Gullion Courtyard, 89 Drumintee Road, Newry, Co. Down, BT35 8SW	The Regener8 Downpatrick project will deliver Level 1 Good Relations and Personal Development; Level 2 Skills and Social Development and Level 3 Education and Employability Development to 16 young people over 21 months.	£167,932
Clanrye Group Newry Slieve Gullion Courtyard, 89 Drumintee Road, Newry, Co. Down, BT35 8SW.	The Regener8 project will work with 15 young people not in education, employment or training, who are vulnerable to paramilitary recruitment and/or been in, or close to, the criminal justice system. It will deliver Levels 1 to 3.	£167,932
ARDEE, MID LOUTH		
Ardee District and Community Trust DeeHub, Market Street, Ardee, Co. Louth.	This project aims to provide a safe and supportive environment for young people, to provide services, support and training to address the needs of young people at risk of disadvantage, social exclusion and addiction and to support young and older adults who are unemployed or at risk of unemployment to access the labour market through the provision of targeted training and services.	€194,036
MONEYMORE, DROGHEDA		
Connect Family Responce Centre 171 Moneymore, Drogheda, Co. Louth.	This project supports 16 vulnerable young people to attain educational qualifications and employment, which would otherwise have been out of their reach.	€164,106
DROGHEDA		
Foroige Drogheda Foroige, C/O Monaghan Neighbourhood Youth Project, H18 YO37.	The project provides employability Training including C.V. preparation, job boards registration, job applications, college registration, grant aid applications, study workshops, Louth Local Development Applications, IT upskilling.	€124,214
DONEGAL		
Donegal Youth Services 16-18 Port Road, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, F92 N2KC.	The project supports a group of 16 young people over the course of 16 months. The two experienced Project Workers will continue to work with young people through one-to-one and group-work. They will be supported by DYS's Programme Director (Manager) and by a PTE Administration Support Worker.	€141,882
Donegal Youth Services 16-18 Port Road, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, F92 N2KC.	This OPOF Initiative project will bring together two youth projects in Donegal and Northern Ireland to intentionally connect young people from Donegal and Strabane. The participants will engage in a programme of activities on a cross-border basis, connect monthly across the two community areas, deliver good relations workshops and engage young people in dialogue and conversation about the history of the conflict and its impact on the border region.	OPOF* Funding €10,000

* OPOF- Our Peace Our Future

Lead Partner Name/Address	Project Description	Financial Commitment
DONEGAL		
Bundoran Community Development CLG Drumacrin, Bundoran, Co. Donegal, F94 RH33.	This is a new PYDP project which will support 16 young people over a period of 21 months. Participants will be recruited in the first months of the project and will be supported at PYDP Levels 1 and 2, possibly reaching Level 3 in Year 2 of the project.	€133,751
Bundoran Community Development CLG Drumacrin, Bundoran, Co. Donegal, F94 RH33.	This OPOF Initiative project will see a widening of the scope of the current project to include a broader community base, mainly targeting older citizens, women's groups and members of new communities, namely those families displaced by the conflict in Ukraine. The project will coordinate facilitated activities, events, conversations and dialogue sessions within the community through water-based activities.	OPOF* Funding €8,300
Lifford Conleigh Resource Centre & Include Youth Croaghan, Heights, Lifford, Co. Donegal, F93 WR22.	This is a new local leadership programme at PYDP Level 4. The project will support 70 young people from communities along the East Donegal and West Tyrone border over a period of two years. Participants on the programme will develop local leadership skills, through cross-border and cross-community development work.	€74,941
Lifford Conleigh Resource Centre & Include Youth Croaghan, Heights, Lifford, Co. Donegal, F93 WR22.	This is a new local leadership programme at PYDP Level 4. The project will support 70 young people from communities along the East Donegal and West Tyrone border over a period of two years. Participants on the programme will develop local leadership skills, through cross-border and cross-community development work.	OPOF* Funding €10,950

* OPOF- Our Peace Our Future

Lead Partner Name/Address	Project Description	Financial Commitment
CAVAN		
Foroige Cavan C/O Monaghan Neighbourhood Youth Project, H18 YO37.	This project is delivering a Level 1 Good Relations and Personal Development; Level 2 Skills and Social Development and Level 3 Education and Employability Development over 24 months. The project supports 10 young people who are unemployed and not engaged in training or education. The project target individuals furthest from the labour market who are most at risk, vulnerable to polarisation and come from complex backgrounds. The programme aims to break the negative pathway which may lead them to criminality and paramilitarism.	€88,945
SLIGO		
Foroige Sligo Foroige Youth Crib, Rockwood Parade, Co. Sligo.	The project supports 16 young people who are unemployed and not engaged in training or education. The programme aims to break the negative pathway which may lead them to criminality and paramilitarism.	€170,945
Foroige Sligo Foroige Youth Crib, Rockwood Parade, Co. Sligo.	This OPOF Initiative project will further enhance the positive North-South relationship between young people in Sligo and Enniskillen. The young people will have the opportunity to explore how communities work together to foster peace and reconciliation in a meaningful way through sport and recreation. This includes a two night cross-community stay at a Residential Activity Centre where both groups will experience adventure activities enhancing personal effectiveness skills such as teamwork, collaboration, delegation, leadership, communication, and organisational skills.	OPOF* Funding €14,500

* OPOF- Our Peace Our Future

AMBIT

The AMBIT (American Management and Business Internship Training) outreach and capacity building Programme has been successfully running for over 20 years. It involves an annual field trip in March to the United States funded by the IFI, facilitated by the US consulate in Belfast and managed by the Washington Ireland Program (WIP).



Andrew Morrow pictured on AMBIT 2023.

Promoting and safeguarding



ABOVE: The group visited El Paso as part of the 2023 trip.

More than 200 participants have taken part to date and the Programme aims to develop partnerships and encourages collaboration to support individual development as well as create an awareness of the IFI's work at a local and international level.

Individuals from Northern Ireland and the southern border counties, from a range of professional and community sector backgrounds take part. For the second year, WIP and the IFI worked alongside AMBIT alumni to nominate potential participants, who were invited to apply following a shortlisting process.

Many of those involved work with at-risk young people and in communities that continue to live with the legacy of The Troubles. Those previously involved have gone on to achieve great success in politics, civic life and community development and have gained considerable further expertise thanks to AMBIT.

Each year the Programme explores a series of themes and participants engage with non-profit organisations, government departments and Congressional Representatives and have the chance to experience first-hand how these challenges affect communities in some of the most deprived inner-city areas in the US. Themes studied to date include policy, community development, supporting young people at risk, mental health and establishing alternatives to mainstream provisions.

The AMBIT 2023 group visited El Paso and Washington DC exploring four key themes: managing multiple identities in a shared space, navigating experiences of collective and intergenerational trauma, addressing youth unemployment, and promoting democratic renewal.

Key highlights included visiting the Hope Border Institute, the office of Congresswoman Escobar and the National Alliance on Mental Illness in El Paso. During the final part of the trip in Washington DC participants met Speaker Nancy Pelosi and the US Department of State. One participant also took part in a panel with MLAS to share insights on democratic renewal in Northern Ireland following an address by Leo Varadkar and Joseph Kennedy III, the Special Envoy to Northern Ireland for Economic Affairs.

Andrew Morrow is a Project Manager with Northern Ireland Alternatives in Magherafelt. He came back from AMBIT 23 with a fresh outlook and newfound confidence for his work at home.

“In my day-to-day role I provide intervention, support and conflict resolution via our Mediation and Community Support programme. I applied for AMBIT as I was at the stage of my leadership journey that required me to diversify and examine how leadership looks in other aspects of life, culture, politics, and communities.”

Whilst all of the themes were useful, Andrew felt drawn to Multiple Identities in a Shared Space and Trauma. The learnings here shaped experience and developed his leadership skills further enabling him to deliver more for the communities he works with.

“My biggest takeaway from AMBIT was certainly a reinforcement that Northern Ireland has come so far as a society post-conflict, but also that we have so much farther to go. It also reinforced the importance of a strong collaborative approach when it comes to everything from communities to infrastructure and to government.



ABOVE: AMBIT 2023 group pictured at the Eisenhower Executive Building at the White House with Carmel Martin, Domestic Policy Advisor to Vice President Kamala Harris and the Deputy Assistant to President Joe Biden.



ABOVE: Nancy Pelosi spends some time with the group.

“It allowed me to take stock of where we are as a society in Northern Ireland, to really appreciate the amazing work that is taking place here. This undoubtedly shines through in our work and most importantly the communities that we are living and working in. I believe that communities in Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland as a whole, are seeing and reaping the benefits of the learning experience that AMBIT has been for us.”

Following the trip, participants reflected on their learning and experiences at a graduation at the Corrymeela Community, Northern Ireland’s oldest peace and reconciliation organisation, and many continue to keep in touch with their peers in the US.

Looking ahead, the IFI recognises the influential role that the Programme has in nurturing and developing local community leadership by working in partnership with policy makers and funding bodies at a local and international level. The programme will continue to collaborate, share and engage with other organisations and regions who are ready to move towards lasting peace.



ABOVE: Participants visiting the Office of Congresswoman Escobar in El Paso.

ACCOUNTS

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30th September 2023

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Board Members' Report

The Board Members present their report and the audited financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2023.

Authority

The Agreement between the Governments of Ireland and of the United Kingdom to establish the International Fund for Ireland ("IFI") was signed on 18 September 1986. Notifications of acceptance were exchanged on 1 December 1986 and orders giving effect to the Agreement in the domestic law of the United Kingdom and of Ireland became operational on 12 December 1986.

Article 3

Article 3 of the Agreement to establish IFI provides that approximately three-quarters of the resources of IFI should be spent in Northern Ireland and one quarter should be spent in the Republic of Ireland.

Principal Activities and Review of Business

IFI continues to structure its business operations to address the principal objectives set out in its founding Agreement:

"to promote economic and social advance and to encourage contact, dialogue and reconciliation between nationalists and unionists throughout Ireland"

In the opinion of the Board Members, the state of affairs of IFI at 30 September 2023 is satisfactory.

Results

The deficit for the financial year is (£3,264k) / (€3,761k) [2022: surplus £1,799k / €2,048k].

Events occurring after the year end

There have been no significant events since the year end which affect the financial statements.

Political donations

IFI made no political donations during the year [2022: £/€ nil].

Board Members' Attendance

During the year, there were three Board meetings and three Special Board meetings. Details of the attendance of individual Board Members during the year was as follows:

Board Member	Number of Board Meetings Attended	Number of Special Board Meetings Attended
Paddy Harte	3	3
Avila Kilmurray	3	3
Peter Osborne	3	2
Bernie Butler	3	2
Sadie Ward-McDermott	3	2
Anne Carr	3	3

Policy on Disabled Employees

IFI aims to ensure that disablement is not a bar to recruitment or advancement.

Board Members' Report (continued)

Equality

IFI is committed to effectively fulfilling its statutory duties in respect of equality. IFI considers equality implications in developing its policies and guidance.

Statement of Board Members' Responsibilities in Respect of the Annual Report and the Financial Statements

The Board Members are responsible for preparing the financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of IFI and of the surplus or deficit of IFI for that period. In fulfilling that responsibility, they have decided to prepare the financial statements in accordance with accounting standards issued by the Financial Reporting Council applicable in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

In preparing those financial statements, the Board Members have:

- selected suitable accounting policies and applied them consistently;
- made judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- stated whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepared the financial statements on the going concern basis, unless it is inappropriate to presume that IFI will continue in business.

The Board Members confirm that they have complied with the above requirements in preparing the financial statements.

The Board Members are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of IFI and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with best practice. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of IFI and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Board Members are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of IFI's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom and Ireland governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Statement of disclosure of information to auditors

So far as each of the Board Members in office at the date of approval of these financial statements is aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which IFI's auditors are unaware; and
- they have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken as Board Members in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that IFI's auditors are aware of that information.

Statement on Internal Control

Scope of responsibility

The Board is accountable and responsible for, supported by IFI's senior management team, maintaining a sound system of internal control that supports the achievement of IFI's policies, aims and objectives, whilst safeguarding the donors' funds and those assets for which IFI is responsible. IFI's founding agreement states that it is an international organisation of which the two Governments are members.

Board Members' Report (continued)

The purpose of the system of internal control

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of IFI's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically. The system of internal control has been in place in IFI for the year ended 30 September 2023 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and financial statements.

The risk and control framework and the capacity to deal with risk

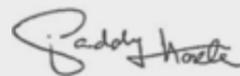
IFI has carried out appropriate procedures to ensure the identification of IFI's objectives and risks and determined a control strategy for each of the significant risks. Risk is assessed on the basis of the likelihood of its occurrence and its potential impact on the organisation. Control measures have been identified to mitigate the impact of such occurrences. Risk ownership has been allocated to the appropriate staff and IFI has set out its attitude to risk to the achievement of IFI's objectives. IFI's Board has ensured that procedures are in place for verifying that aspects of risk management and internal control are reviewed regularly by the Audit Committee and reported to the Board. Risk management has been incorporated into the corporate planning and decision making processes of IFI.

An organisation-wide risk register has been developed which the Board regularly reviews. Appropriate steps have been taken to manage risks in significant areas of responsibility and monitor progress on key projects.

Review of effectiveness

As Chair, I have responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control. My review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of the internal auditors of the various agents who administer certain programmes and the senior management who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework, and comments made by the external auditors in their management letter and other reports. My review is also informed by external reviews by auditors working on behalf of donor countries and by a regular independent assessment of the effectiveness of IFI. I have been advised on the implications of the result of my review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control by the Board and the Audit Committee and a plan to address weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement of the system is in place.

By order of the Board



Mr. Paddy Harte
IFI Chair

29 February 2024

Independent auditors' report to the members of International Fund for Ireland

Report on the audit of the financial statements

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of the International Fund for Ireland ("IFI") for the year ended 30 September 2023 which comprise: the Income and Expenditure account, the Statement of Other Comprehensive Income, the Balance Sheet as at 30 September 2023, the Cash Flow Statement, and the Notes to the Financial Statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of IFI's affairs as at 30 September 2023 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of IFI in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Boards' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on IFI's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Board Members with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The Board Members are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon.

Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Independent auditors' report to the members of International Fund for Ireland (continued)

Opinion on other information

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of our audit:

- the information given in the Board Members' report and Statement on Internal Control for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Board Members' report and Statement on Internal Control have been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Other required reporting

We conducted our audit in accordance with ISAs (UK & Ireland). An audit involves obtaining evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error.

This includes an assessment of:

- whether the accounting policies are appropriate to IFI's circumstances and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed;
- the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by the Board Members'; and
- the overall presentation of the financial statements.

We primarily focus our work in these areas by assessing the Board Members' judgements against available evidence, forming our own judgements, and evaluating the disclosures in the financial statements.

We test and examine information, using sampling and other auditing techniques, to the extent we consider necessary to provide a reasonable basis for us to draw conclusions. We obtain audit evidence through testing the effectiveness of controls, substantive procedures or a combination of both.

In addition, we read all the financial and non-financial information in the Annual Report to identify material inconsistencies with the audited financial statements and to identify any information that is apparently materially incorrect based on, or materially inconsistent with, the knowledge acquired by us in the course of performing the audit. If we become aware of any apparent material misstatements or inconsistencies we consider the implications for our report.

Responsibilities of Board Members

As explained more fully in the Board Members' report, the Board Members are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Board Members determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Board Members are responsible for assessing IFI's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Board Members either intend to liquidate IFI or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Independent auditors' report to the members of International Fund for Ireland (continued)

Explanation as to what extent the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. The objectives of our audit in respect of fraud are to assess the risk of material misstatement due to fraud, design and implement appropriate responses to those assessed risks and to respond appropriately to instances of fraud or suspected fraud identified during the course of our audit. However, the primary responsibility for the prevention and detection of fraud rests with management and those charged with governance of IFI.

In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations, our procedures included the following:

- We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory requirements applicable to IFI and considered that the most significant are the UK and Republic of Ireland financial reporting standards as issued by the Financial Reporting Council;
- We assessed the risk of material misstatement of the financial statements, including the risk of material misstatement due to fraud and how it might occur, by holding discussions with management and those charged with governance;
- We enquired of management and those charged with governance as to any known instances of non-compliance or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations;
- Understanding the internal controls established to mitigate risks related to fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations; and
- Discussions amongst the audit engagement team regarding how fraud might occur in the financial statements and any potential indicators of fraud. As part of this discussion we identified the following potential areas where fraud may occur: timing of revenue recognition and management override.

The audit response to risks identified included:

- Reviewing the financial statements disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with the relevant laws and regulations above;
- Performing analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships that may indicate risk of material misstatement due to fraud;
- In addressing the risk of fraud through management override of controls, testing the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments, assessing whether the judgements made in making accounting estimates are reasonable and evaluating the business rationale of any significant transactions that are unusual or outside the normal course of business.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our Auditors' Report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to IFI's members, as a body. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to IFI's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditors' report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than IFI and its members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Mr. Ryan Falls (F.C.A) (Senior Statutory Auditor) for and on behalf of CavanaghKelly Chartered Accountants and Statutory Auditors

36-38 Northland Row
Dungannon
Co. Tyrone
BT71 6AP

29 February 2024

Income and Expenditure Account

for the year ended 30 September 2023

	Notes	Total transactions expressed in £ and Euro €			
		2023 £'000	2022 £'000	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
Income	2	8,053	8,148	9,280	9,266
Expenditure					
Approved projects	7	10,908	6,171	12,570	7,017
Net administrative expenses	3	409	178	471	201
		11,317	6,349	13,041	7,218
Excess of expenditure over income		(3,264)	1,799	(3,761)	2,048
Movement in the Fund balance					
At 1 October 2022		8,599	6,689	9,779	7,810
Exchange differences on retranslation at 1 October 2022		(18)	111	108	(79)
		8,581	6,800	9,887	7,731
Excess of expenditure over income		(3,264)	1,799	(3,761)	2,048
At 30 September 2023		5,317	8,599	6,126	9,779

The amounts above relate to the continuing operations of IFI.

Statement of Other Comprehensive Income

for the year ended 30 September 2023

	Total transactions expressed in £ and Euro €			
	2023 £'000	2022 £'000	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
Excess of expenditure over income	(3,264)	1,799	(3,761)	2,048
Currency translation difference charged to the Fund balance	(18)	111	108	(79)
Total other comprehensive income for the year	(3,282)	1,910	(3,653)	1,969

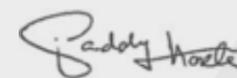
The notes on pages 96 to 100 form part of the financial statements.

Balance Sheet

as at 30 September 2023

	Notes	Total transactions expressed in £ and Euro €			
		2023 £'000	2022 £'000	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
Fixed assets					
Investments	4	-	-	-	-
Current assets					
Cash at bank and on deposit	10	12,732	6,187	14,670	7,037
Donor contributions due	5	3,821	8,968	4,403	10,199
Other amounts receivable	6	23	156	27	177
		16,576	15,311	19,100	17,413
Current liabilities					
Approved project expenditure outstanding	7	11,101	6,604	12,793	7,511
Creditors	9	158	108	181	123
		11,259	6,712	12,974	7,634
Net current assets		5,317	8,599	6,126	9,779
Net assets		5,317	8,599	6,126	9,779
Fund balance at 30 September 2023		5,317	8,599	6,126	9,779

Approved by the Board on 29 February 2024 and signed on its behalf by:



Mr. Paddy Harte
IFI Chair



Bernie Butler
Chair of the Audit Committee

The notes on pages 96 to 100 form part of the financial statements.

Cash Flow Statement

for the year ended 30 September 2023

	Total transactions expressed in £ and Euro €			
	2023 £'000	2022 £'000	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
Cash flows from operating activities				
Excess of expenditure over income	(3,264)	1,799	(3,761)	2,048
Adjustments for:				
Movement in donor contributions due	5,147	(6,960)	5,796	(7,854)
Movement in approved project expenditure outstanding	4,497	1,600	5,282	1,667
Movement in other amounts receivable	133	(4)	150	-
Movement in creditors and accrued expenses	50	1	57	(2)
Foreign exchange gain/(loss) on intercompany transfers	(28)	353	(32)	173
Interest received	(11)	(1)	(13)	(1)
Exchange difference in opening balance	63	81	110	155
Net cash generated from / (used in) operating activities	6,587	(3,131)	7,589	(3,814)
Cash flows from investing activities				
Interest received	11	1	13	1
Net cash from investing activities	11	1	13	1
Net increase in cash	6,598	(3,130)	7,602	(3,813)
Balance at 1 October 2022	6,187	9,638	7,037	11,254
Retranslation to current year exchange rates	(53)	(321)	31	(404)
Balance at 1 October 2022 retranslated to current year exchange rates	6,134	9,317	7,068	10,850
Balance at 30 September 2023	12,732	6,187	14,670	7,037

The notes on pages 96 to 100 form part of the financial statements.

Notes to the Financial Statements

1. Accounting policies

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in the preparation of these financial statements is FRS102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" issued by the Financial Reporting Council. These financial statements are prepared on the going concern basis under the historical cost convention.

The principal accounting policies set out below have been applied consistently throughout the year.

The financial statements are rounded to the nearest £'000/€'000.

Currencies

IFI's transactions are effected in the currencies of each part of Ireland. The financial statements are presented in both currencies, each representing an aggregation of all of the transactions for the year in each part of Ireland translated at the respective exchange rates at the year end. Differences arising on the restatement, to the year-end exchange rate, of monetary assets and liabilities (e.g. amounts due from funders, amounts due to projects and bank balances) at the start of the financial year are adjusted against IFI balance, reported in the statement of other comprehensive income and accounted through reserves.

Approved projects

IFI make grants to fund or assist in the funding of projects and to make or enter into arrangements which are designed to meet expenditure that promotes economic and social advance and to encourage contact, dialogue and reconciliation between nationalists and unionists throughout Ireland.

The income and expenditure account reflects the anticipated cost of projects approved in the year (after deduction of projects which did not proceed) and related administration expenditure. The projects approved in the year are considered as a hard commitment, which is defined as the grant sum payable over the life of a project on which we have a written contractual agreement with the applicant. Hard commitments are charged to the income statement in the year that the contracts are signed. Project approvals are shown on the balance sheet as a liability, the balance being reduced as payments to grant recipients are released.

Taxation

The Agreement between the Governments of Ireland and the United Kingdom to establish IFI in 1986 stipulated that IFI is exempt from the payment of direct taxes.

Interest income

The income and expenditure account includes interest credited to the bank deposit accounts during the year together with interest accrued, but not actually credited, at the year end.

Investments

Fixed asset investments are stated at their purchase cost less any provision for diminution in value. Investment income is included in the income and expenditure account on an accruals basis.

Income recognition

Donor countries allocate funds on the basis of calendar years. The whole amount allocated is recognised in the financial year when it has been contractually allocated by the donor country.

Resources Expended

Expenditure is recognised when a liability is incurred. Contractual arrangements and performance related grants are recognised as goods and services are supplied.

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

Cash at bank and on deposit

Cash at bank and on deposits comprise cash balances and call deposits.

Donor contributions receivable

Donor contributions receivable are recognised at the settlement amount, when promised, without any timing adjustment.

Other receivables

Other receivables are measured at the settlement amount.

Creditors

Creditors are measured at the settlement amount.

Judgments in applying accounting policies and key sources of estimation uncertainty

In the process of applying IFI's accounting policies, no significant judgements have been made. There are no key assumptions concerning the future or other key sources of estimation, that have a significant risk of raising a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next financial year.

2. Income

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
From donors after exchange rate adjustments				
United States of America	3,691	2,247	4,253	2,555
UK Government	1,000	1,000	1,153	1,137
Irish Government	3,905	4,233	4,500	4,814
New Zealand	48	-	55	-
Exchange rate adjustments	(602)	457	(694)	520
	8,042	7,937	9,267	9,026
Interest receivable	11	1	13	1
Miscellaneous Income	-	3	-	4
	11	4	13	5
Dividend Received	-	207	-	235
	8,053	8,148	9,280	9,266

Donor countries allocate funds on the basis of calendar years. The whole amount becoming due within each calendar year is recognised within IFI's accounts to 30 September without any timing adjustment.

The exchange rate adjustments relate to exchange gains and losses arising from the translation of US\$ and Euro denominated donor contributions. The extent to which any gain or loss is realised will depend on exchange rate movements up to the date of receipt of contributions due.

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

3. Net administration expenses

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
Board Members' fees	111	104	127	119
Board Meetings	31	23	36	26
Consultancy and other fees	278	183	321	208
Auditors' remuneration - Audit	16	19	18	22
Travelling and subsistence	144	57	166	65
Postage, stationery, telephone and office expenses	1	7	1	8
Promotional and advertising expenses	73	42	84	46
Miscellaneous	5	24	6	26
	659	459	759	520
Less: Contributions receivable from the Governments of the UK and Ireland in respect of an element of the above expenses	(250)	(281)	(288)	(319)
	409	178	471	201

Certain other expenses of IFI, including accommodation and staff expenses, are met directly by the UK and Ireland governments and are not therefore reflected in these financial statements.

No employees are paid directly by IFI (2022: £nil /€nil), these costs are borne by the member Governments, who the contract of employment is with.

4. Fixed asset investments

	Unlisted Investment	
	£'000	€'000
Cost		
At 1 October 2022	-	-
At 30 September 2023	-	-
Provision		
At 1 October 2022	-	-
Charge for year	-	-
At 30 September 2023	-	-
Net book value		
At 30 September 2023	-	-
At 30 September 2022	-	-

The International Fund for Ireland held the following shareholdings in subsidiaries and joint ventures:

- IFI Financial Investments Limited – 100% shareholding
- Enterprise Equity Investment Fund Limited – 50% shareholding

During the year ended 30 September 2021 both companies entered into company voluntary liquidations and ceased to be under the control of IFI upon the appointment of the liquidator on 29 September 2021. The process of liquidation for both companies concluded during the year ended 30 September 2022.

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

5. Donor contributions due

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
United States of America				
- 2015 (US\$0.01m)	8	9	9	10
- 2019 (US\$0.75m)	-	675	-	767
- 2020 (US\$2m)	-	1,796	-	2,044
- 2021 (US\$2.5m)	-	2,247	-	2,555
- 2023 (US\$4.12m)	3,378	-	3,893	-
Republic of Ireland				
- 2022 (€0.5m)	435	4,241	501	4,823
	3,821	8,968	4,403	10,199

6. Other amounts receivable

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
Government contribution	-	132	-	150
Bank interest receivable	23	24	27	27
	23	156	27	177

7. Approved project expenditure outstanding

The totals of IFI's project disbursements and associated fees in the year ended 30 September 2023 and the movements in approved projects outstanding are as follows:

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
Approved project expenditure outstanding at 1 October 2022	6,604	5,003	7,511	5,842
Foreign exchange re-translation	(19)	34	78	(112)
Approved project expenditure outstanding at 1 October 2022	6,585	5,037	7,589	5,730
Project approvals in the year	10,908	6,171	12,570	7,017
Project disbursements and associated fees in the year	(6,392)	(4,604)	(7,366)	(5,236)
Approved project expenditure outstanding at 30 September 2023	11,101	6,604	12,793	7,511

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

8. Cumulative approved projects and disbursements to date

Cumulatively, the totals of IFI's approved projects and project disbursements to date are summarised:

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
Total approved projects to date	771,193	760,304	963,232	950,548
Less contributions to investment companies	(27,142)	(27,142)	(40,023)	(40,023)
	744,051	733,162	923,209	910,561
Total disbursements to projects and administration costs to date	(732,950)	(726,558)	(910,416)	(903,050)
Approved project expenditure outstanding at 30 September	11,101	6,604	12,793	7,511

To date, IFI has approved total payments in respect of specific projects and administration costs to a total of £771 / €963 million, after deduction of approved projects which did not proceed.

The approved project expenditure outstanding at 30 September 2023, reported in the balance sheet, represents the unspent balance of the projects approved for which a claim for payment of grant has yet to be received.

9. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
Accruals	103	53	118	60
Deferred income	55	55	63	63
	158	108	181	123

10. Components of cash at bank and on deposit

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
Cash at hand and on deposit	12,732	6,187	14,670	7,037
	12,732	6,187	14,670	7,037

Analysis of programme disbursements

for the year and of approved projects outstanding at 30 September 2023 (unaudited)

	Approved project expenditure outstanding at 30 Sept 2022	Retranslated at 30 Sept 2022	Project approvals and admin costs*	Project and admin disbursements	Approved project expenditure outstanding at 30 Sept 2023
Expressed in £'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
AMBIT	-	-	198	(198)	-
CIPP	483	(2)	2,442	(711)	2,212
Peace Projects					
Peace Barriers	1,149	3	875	(959)	1,068
Peace Impact	2,784	(7)	3,500	(2,308)	3,969
Personal Youth Development	2,188	(13)	3,893	(2,216)	3,852
	6,604	(19)	10,908	(6,392)	11,101

	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000
Expressed in €'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000
AMBIT	-	-	230	(230)	-
CIPP	550	5	2,813	(819)	2,549
Peace Projects					
Peace Barriers	1,305	22	1,007	(1,103)	1,231
Peace Impact	3,167	33	4,034	(2,660)	4,574
Personal Youth Development	2,489	18	4,486	(2,554)	4,439
	7,511	78	12,570	(7,366)	12,793

* The approval figures in the analysis above differ from the approvals detailed in the annual report for each programme as a result of: the inclusion of programme administrative costs in the amounts above; and the removal of amounts decommitted in year i.e. amounts approved in previous years which are no longer payable.