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Landmark Irish language Arts, Culture and Enterprise Centre to Open

An Gaeláras, the North West's leading Irish language Arts and Cultural organisation, is due to open a new purpose-built Irish language Arts, Culture and Business Enterprise Centre on Great James Street in Londonderry, later this month.

The project, which cost in the region of £4 million, has been in the planning and fundraising stages since 2002 and is widely recognised as one of the most important developments in the recent history of the Irish language community in the region.

The project is supported by a range of funding agencies including the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Foras na Gaeilge, the European Union's PEACE II Programme administered by the Special EU Programmes Body through the Derry Local Strategy Partnership, Ilex Urban Regeneration Company, the Integrated Development Fund, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, the Department of Trade and Investment (IFI) and the Department for Social Development.

Chief executive of An Gaeláras Gearoid O hEára said:

“This project is of major strategic importance to the Irish language community and to the city as a whole; it is symbolic of a language community which is eager to reach out to all communities and its development is an invitation to all to use the centre and to take ownership of the space as a community building.”

Speaking after a tour of the new building SEUPB's Chief executive Pat Colgan said:

“This project which has been assisted by the European Union's PEACE II fund under measure 3.1 is aimed at local economic initiatives for developing local communities. An Gaelaras demonstrates how the local community has taken this opportunity to create the space where people can develop new skills, as well as promoting cultural diversity while building an inclusive ethos for learning.”

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Notes to editors:

The new centre -- named Cultúrlann Uí Chanáin after Seán Ó Canáin, a long-time champion of the Irish language -- will be the largest of its kind on the island and will include:

- Multipurpose Arts Centre with 200-seat theatre
- Arts Exhibition Space
- Irish language bookshop
- Café and bistro
- Business Incubation Suite
- Offices
- Class-rooms
- Youth Facilities

Designed by award-winning Dublin architects O'Donnell and Tuomey, the new building is sympathetically integrated into the urban context of the Great James Street area and yet is set to assert itself as one of the great cultural and architectural landmarks of the city. The building was entered as one of Ireland's exhibits at the Venice Biennale in 2008.

