



PRESS RELEASE

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JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT

WITNESSES GROUND-BREAKING PEACE WORK

Members of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement were today given a detailed insight into how the European Union is supporting peace and reconciliation work across Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland.

Pat Colgan, Chief Executive of the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), which is responsible for the management of the European Union's PEACE III and INTERREG IVA Programmes, briefed a number of the committee members on the positive impact that both programmes have had to date.

"Following its official launch in 2007 the PEACE III Programme has allocated approximately £236 million worth of support to a wide range of projects across the region. We are just over half-way through the current programming period and there is still approximately £66 million remaining to be allocated to worthwhile projects that will reinforce peace and stability," commented Pat Colgan, Chief Executive of the SEUPB.

"The EU's INTERREG IVA Programme has been designed to create a more prosperous and sustainable cross-border region and is worth £232 million. Of this figure approximately £149 million has been allocated to projects that are supporting enterprise and business development as well as greater levels of public sector collaboration and infrastructure development," continued Pat.

The Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement was established in October 2007 and is made up of representatives from both the Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann. It is responsible for all issues connected with Ireland's role as a signatory to the Good Friday Agreement and any ongoing developments in its implementation.



Members of the Westminster Parliament elected in Northern Ireland are also permitted to attend meetings of the Oireachtas Joint Committee and any of its sub-Committees.

Commenting on the visit, Dominic Hannigan TD and elected Chairman of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, said:

“I am delighted to have seen evidence of the very substantial investment from the European Union PEACE III programme creating effective results in North Belfast. The INTERREG IVA Programme really has proven to be a success in seeking to aid peace and reconciliation projects across the island of Ireland, and it is encouraging that there is still quite substantial investment to come. The work of the SEUPB demonstrates how we can maximise success by working in cooperation with each other.”

Following the presentation by the SEUPB the Oireachtas Joint Committee members were taken to Groundwork NI to hear about the ‘Reconciling Communities through Regeneration’ (RCTR) project, which has received just under £1 million worth of support from the EU’s PEACE III Programme.

This funding will allow Groundwork NI to implement a series of locally focused initiatives specifically designed to transform interface areas in ten different locations across Northern Ireland and Ireland.

Since October 2008, Groundwork NI has been engaging with various different local community groups surrounding Alexandra Park with the aim of improving community relations and encouraging cross-community dialogue.

It recently launched a new ‘peace gate’ within the peace wall that cuts through the park in order to create a shared neutral space for a community divided by sectarianism.

The wall was originally erected in 1994 in order to help prevent frequent sectarian rioting between members of the community living within Newington and Tigers Bay area of North Belfast.



Speaking about the project Sylvia Gordon, Director of Groundwork NI said;

“The opening of the peace gate is a first step towards bringing both communities together through a recreational space and we would hope this will have a direct and positive impact on the daily lives of people who live within the area of the park.”

For more information on the work of the SEUPB, please visit www.seupb.eu

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Notes to Editor:

SEUPB

The Special EU Programmes Body is a North/South Implementation Body sponsored by the Department of Finance and Personnel in Northern Ireland and the Department of Finance in Ireland. It is responsible for managing two EU structural funds Programmes PEACE III and INTERREG IVA designed to enhance cross-border co-operation, promote reconciliation and create a more peaceful and prosperous society. The programmes operate within a clearly defined area including Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and in the case of INTERREG IVA, Western Scotland.

The PEACE III Programme, funded through the European Regional Development Fund, is worth €333 million and is aimed primarily at reinforcing progress towards a peaceful and stable society and promoting reconciliation. It focuses on helping Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland to reconcile communities and contribute towards a shared society.

The INTERREG IVA 2007-2013 Programme, funded through the European Regional Development Fund, is worth €256 million and aims to address the economic and social problems which result from the existence of borders. It has two distinct priority measures to create co-operation for a more prosperous and sustainable cross-border region. For more information on the SEUPB please visit www.seupb.eu