

Press Release

Date: 08 November 2022

Funders and Community leaders celebrate Waterside Shared Village Project

Funders and partners from Derry City and Strabane District Council, the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), the Department for Communities, Northern Ireland, and the Department of Rural and Community Development, Ireland met this week at an event to celebrate the Waterside Shared Village Project.



Official Opening of Waterside Shared Village The Mayor of Derry and Strabane, Councillor Sandra Duffy, cutting the tape to officially open the Waterside Shared Village. Included, from left, are Mark O'Donnell, Deputy Secretary, Housing, Urban Regeneration & Local Government, Department for Communities, John Kelpie, Chief Executive, Derry City and Strabane Council, and Helen Donaldson, Joint Secretariat Director, Special EU Programmes Body.

The funders of this unique shared space were joined by community representatives and local elected representatives to celebrate the completion of this €8m, EU funded community development for the Waterside area.

The project is supported by the European Union's PEACE IV Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), and led by Derry City & Strabane District Council, working in partnership with the Irish Street Youth & Community Association and Hillcrest Community Trust.



Match-funding was provided by the Department for Communities, Northern Ireland and the Department of Rural and Community Development, Ireland.

The Waterside Shared Village (WSV) includes a state-of-the-art hub building and sports complex located in the interface area between Irish Street and Top of the Hill. The facility aims to build trust and reconciliation between the two communities by creating a safe place for residents to engage in activities together.

The centre includes a hall that has the capability of being transformed into four meeting or training rooms, a community kitchen, office space and a suite of sports changing rooms. The area around the community hub comprises of 3G and grass pitch, a cricket training area and tennis courts.

The Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council, Councillor Sandra Duffy said she was delighted to have everyone together who supported the shared the vision for a transformative shared space for the area.

She said: "This project is hugely significant for our Council and its partners and will be transformational for all communities in the Waterside, bringing them together to deliver a shared programme of education, sports, health and well-being and cultural activities. It will also encourage communities to work in partnership to create safe and shared spaces where they can interact, building trust and reconciliation through meaningful and rewarding experiences and joint community initiatives."

Representing the Department for Communities NI, Deputy Secretary Mark O'Donnell said: "I congratulate Derry City and Strabane District Council and their project partners, Irish Street Youth & Community Association and Hillcrest Community Trust, in championing and progressing this project. The Department's purpose is to make this a great place to live for everybody by supporting people, building communities, and shaping places.

"This project is an exemplar of what can be achieved, with neighbouring communities working together to transform a former disused school site on an interface, into a new shared space for everyone in this area. The contribution that the Department has made to the Waterside Shared Village project, through the provision of match funding and by transferring the land to develop the



project, demonstrates its continued commitment to ensure the needs of communities, as expressed by the communities themselves, are met."

Minister Heather Humphreys TD, Department of Rural and Community Development Ireland, said: "I am delighted to see the launch of the Waterside Shared Village project, for which over €8m in funding was approved under the EU PEACE IV Programme. "This project will have a transformative effect on the Waterside area, transforming the derelict site of the former Clondermot High School into a state-of-the-art new community hub and sports facility. We all know that communities that come together and participate in educational, sport and recreational activities develop strong social bonds and build relationships that lead to happier, safer and stronger communities. This is exactly what this project sets out to achieve.

"I want to congratulate Derry City & Strabane District Council and their project partners, the Irish Street Youth and Community Association and Hillcrest Community Trust for all their hard work and dedication in bringing the project to this point, it is a credit to all involved."

Commenting on the significance of the project, Gina McIntyre, Chief Executive of the SEUPB, said: "As a result of our past history, many sections of our society still live highly segregated lives. They feel safer learning, working and socialising only with people from a similar background. This can lead to increased tensions, mistrust and prejudice and prevent communities and individuals from moving forward.

"The EU PEACE IV funded Waterside Shared Village creates a safe, neutral space on an interface area that will help to positively transform the lives of many local residents. It creates a vibrant new community hub and state-of-the-art sports facility that can be used safely by all. I would like to congratulate everyone who has been involved in the delivery of the project to date."

Chief Executive of Derry City and Strabane District Council, John Kelpie, said community facility and shared space provision remained a key element of the Council's ongoing commitments set out in its Strategic Growth Plan. He said Council was committed to providing safe, accessible and inclusive spaces across the Council area that encourage communities to interact and develop.

"This is a major regeneration project for the Council area and one which will have a significant positive impact on the communities in the Waterside. It's a perfect example of how community



organisations can work alongside Council and funders to bring forward a proposal that will transform this former school site into an iconic shared space for the entire community to avail of and enjoy."

Community Workers, Niree McMorris, Irish Street Community & Youth Association and Geraldine Doherty, Hillcrest Trust, said they were delighted that the Waterside Shared Village will not only change the physical landscape of the area, but will improve the life chances of the residents there. In a joint statement they said: "The project will help promote reconciliation by bringing people from all backgrounds together and allowing them to engage and interact with each other in a safe shared space.

"It will also encourage people to build new relationships and renew old friendships through joint educational, sport and recreational programmes as well as being a positive example of the shared future which the EU Peace IV Programme aims to support."

For more info on the project visit - <http://derrystrabaneleisure.com/watersidesharedvillage/>

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Notes to Editor:

- The Special EU Programmes Body is a North/South Implementation Body sponsored by the Department of Finance in Northern Ireland and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in Ireland.
- It is responsible for managing two EU Structural Funds Programmes, PEACE IV and INTERREG VA which are 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 VA, Western Scotland.
- The PEACE IV Programme has a value of €270 million and aims to promote peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland.
- For more information on the SEUPB please visit www.seupb.eu

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