



PRESS RELEASE

Date: Tuesday 5th March

NEW REGIONAL PROJECT LAUNCHED

Ashton Community Trust (ACT), in partnership with Coiste na nIarchimí, are launching a regional positive good relations programme aimed at reconnecting and reintegrating individuals and communities impacted by the legacy of the conflict.

The £1.2m Building Positive Relations programme is funded under the European Union's PEACE IV Programme, which is managed by the Special EU Programmes Body.

The Building Positive Relations project is led by ACT and involves a partnership between the Coiste Network (that represents political ex-prisoners), Veterans for Peace, Irish Immigration Advisors and Belfast Conflict Resolution Centre.

The project started in late 2018 and aims to conclude in 2020. The work is regional and aims to impact on communities in areas such as Dundalk, Letterkenny, Derry/Londonderry, Leitrim, Monaghan and Belfast.

Michael Culbert from Coiste said: **“Coiste na nIarchimí has been in existence for the past 18 years. We are very appreciative of the invaluable support of the European Union, along with the Governments, for the work which we do – both within the constituency of the Republican ex-prisoner community and in society in general.**

Our aim is to ensure that the outcomes of our work will result in a peaceful, equal and cohesive future for all citizens, communities and our society in general.”

Welcoming the project Gina McIntyre, CEO of the Special EU Programmes Body said: **“This project will help to address many of the complex needs of the ex-prisoner community by challenging some of the stereotypes and stigma that they face on a daily basis. Working with this community it will coordinate regional-wide events and conferences on conflict resolution and peace-building. The project also recognises many of the mental health issues which affect the projects participants leaving them**



highly vulnerable to becoming socially isolated. To help alleviate this it will provide counselling and resilience building support.”

ACT Chief Executive Paul Roberts described the project as important bridge building work, **“Despite elements of perceived difference, in the history of our work we have identified there are substantial commonalities affecting these same areas. These everyday common themes focus on social, economic, housing, dereliction, lack of inward government investment, employment and poor health,”** Paul said.

“Taking part in this project will offer individuals the chance to address the past in a substantial way and we feel will be welcomed especially by communities who want to move forward. This work will also have a positive influence on society at large, and will contribute to ongoing processes aimed at ensuring the past is not repeated.”

Overall, the Building Positive Relations project is set to engage with all communities especially where there is a legacy of difference in relation to attitudes and perceptions on conflict related issues.

The project is seeking to dispel myths and allow relationships to be built which will benefit not only individuals but also their wider social support network.

- ENDS.

Notes for the editor:

SEUPB

- 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.



Northern Ireland - Ireland

European Regional Development Fund



Special EU Programmes Body
Foras Um Chláir Speisialta An AE
Boord O Owre Ocht UE Projecks

- 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