



## Press Release

**Date: Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2019**

### **€6M OF EU FUNDING OFFERED TO HELP CONNECT DIVIDED COMMUNITIES IN COUNTY TYRONE**

**One of the most visible consequences of the troubles/conflict is the high level of social segregation which can be found right across the region.**

Communities continue to live and socialise separately, with many lacking access to a shared environment where they feel safe enough to meet and learn from one another. The absence of these spaces serves only to maintain division and increase social tension.

In order to help address this approximately €6m worth of funding has been offered, under the European Union's PEACE IV Programme, to the Connecting Pomeroy project which will encourage greater levels of cross-community contact within the local area.

Three core elements form the focus of the project, which will enhance the look and feel of the centre of the village, create a suite of new community facilities, and boost outdoor and tourism opportunities through the development of a 'magic forest'.

A total of £2M has been allocated to the forest scheme to develop a visitor centre and enchanted trail in Pomeroy Forest, featuring innovative interactive artworks through which visitors and locals alike can explore the area's rich natural heritage, while also creating opportunities for shared learning experiences with school, youth and community groups.

New £1M community facilities will open up shared spaces for local people to enjoy, including a hall at the Church of Ireland, a 3-G multi-use games area at the Presbyterian Church and a new gym at the Pomeroy Plunkett's GAC.

Pomeroy will also benefit from a public realm upgrade, enhancing footpaths, lighting and planting and helping to connect the top and bottom of the village, which have previously been considered to be divided by 'invisible' peace walls. The £1M investment in this element of the project will also establish physical linkages between each of the new facilities.



Supporting the capital investment is a three year engagement programme to generate contact across the community, particularly among children and young people, encouraging respect and understanding, and leading to the formation of sustained friendships.

Welcoming the project Gina McIntyre, CEO of the Special EU Programmes Body, which manages the PEACE IV Programme, said: **“Large sections of our society still remain deeply divided. Even though they live beside each other, many people do not feel comfortable or safe enough to interact with someone from a different background or culture.**

**“This only serves to keep people apart and mistrustful of each other. Unfortunately, this mistrust is transmitted from one generation to the next, leading to more division and continued separation. This new shared space project will help overcome this problem. It has been specifically designed to bring divided communities together in a space that they feel welcome.**

**“It is one of a number of shared space projects, funded under the EU’s PEACE IV Programme, that will have a hugely transformative impact upon the local communities in which they are located, on both sides of the border,” she continued.**

Match-funding for the projects has been provided by the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland and the Department of Rural and Community Development in Ireland.

Outlining the importance of the funding in achieving the Programme for Government outcome of a ‘shared, welcoming and confident society that respects diversity’, Tracy Meharg, Permanent Secretary at the Department for Communities, said: **“This funding will make a significant contribution to our society by providing accessible shared spaces which facilitate greater levels of cross community contact, interaction and co-operation between communities and organisations with different religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Their impact will be felt locally and across the whole of Northern Ireland and the Border Region.”**

Welcoming the funding Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring TD, commented: **“This funding will make a real difference in the lives of the communities both in Ireland and Northern Ireland. The PEACE IV Programme has a real and**



**invaluable impact on building relations across the border. My Department will work with all parties to ensure delivery of these essential shared spaces.”**

The funding announcement has been hailed as ‘transformative’ for Pomeroy by the Chair of Mid Ulster District Council, Councillor Sean McPeake: **“Individually, each of these projects is significant for Pomeroy, but collectively they are transformative for the village.**

**“They have been developed by the community, based on what local people have identified as their priorities and the opportunities presented to enhance good relations and build mutual understanding within and across communities, are substantial.**

**“This has clearly been recognised by the SEUPB in its funding allocation and everyone involved in the process is extremely grateful”, he continued.**

- ENDS.

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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 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 address the economic and social problems which result from the existence of borders.
- For more information on the SEUPB please visit [www.seupb.eu](http://www.seupb.eu)