



Press Release

Date: Tuesday 8th January 2019

€5.8M OF EU FUNDING OFFERED FOR A NEW SHARED SPACE PROJECT TO BRING DIVIDED COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

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 €5.8m worth of funding has been offered, under the European Union's PEACE IV Programme, to the Newforge Community Development Trust project which will develop a 15-acre site located beside the River Lagan and Newforge Lane in South Belfast.

Led by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) the project aims to transform the site through the provision of enhanced indoor and outdoor sporting facilities including an indoor arena and the creation of a new gym. The new shared space will be available to community groups, youth groups, schools, churches, sports clubs, and local residents on a cross-community basis.

The project will also promote cross-community reconciliation and community support for public security and safety services. Its delivery partners are drawn from various public services including: the NI Fire & Rescue Service; the NI Prison Service; An Garda Síochána; alongside the cross-community sports charity 'Sport Changes Life' and three sport governing bodies.

Welcoming the project Gina McIntyre, CEO of the Special EU Programmes Body, which manages the PEACE IV Programme, said: **"Our society still suffers from high levels of division, which is a legacy of the past. Many people lack the confidence to engage positively with someone from a different background or culture, which unfortunately is also passed down from one generation to the next.**



“The project will help address this issue, it will develop a new shared space where people from different communities feel comfortable to come together and learn from each other.

“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.”**

Stephen Martin, Chair of the Police Sports Association based at Newforge, commented: **“The PSNI has been actively involved in sport for many years and it is clear that it is a great way to build tolerance and understanding throughout society. I am delighted that our funding bid has been successful and I look forward to working with our partners to develop a first class facility which will provide a warm welcome to all members of our community.”**

- ENDS.

For more information please contact John McCandless, Communications Manager with the SEUPB on Mob. 07834 778018 or via e-mail john.mccandless@seupb.eu



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