**Press release (DRAFT for SEUPB and Ministerial Inclusions)**

**Thursday, 6th June 2024**

**Council and Communities celebrate launch of £8 million PEACEPLUS programme.**

Derry City and Strabane District Council and the PEACEPLUS Partnership Board have officially launched an £8,047,327 (€9,254,427) funded programme. The Local Co-Designed Action Plan, developed through an intensive co-design process in partnership with local communities, will fund 58 council area projects. The Local Co-Designed Action Plan is aproject supported by PEACEPLUS, a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

**Speaking at the launch,** **Executive Office Junior Minister Pam Cameron said:**

*“It is heartening to know this new action plan will support a wide range of initiatives aimed at promoting reconciliation, building trust and fostering greater understanding between communities. This is another step towards a more peaceful and prosperous society, and I’d like to thank everyone who will see the plan through from its inception to conclusion, from council staff to delivery partners and the many participants who are doing so much to foster good relations and build a brighter future for us all.”*

**Executive Office Junior Minister Aisling Reilly said**:

“At its core, this action plan is about empowering local communities to take ownership of peace and reconciliation, and to drive positive change from the ground up. It reflects the voices, aspirations and priorities of the people who know this community best – the people who live and work here every day. This new plan is an opportunity to build on the significant progress that has been made over the years and to create a more resilient, cohesive and vibrant society for future generations.”

**Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development, Joe O’Brien TD said:**

*“I would like to congratulate everyone who contributed in any way to the development of the Derry City and Strabane District Council PEACEPLUS Local Co-Designed Action Plan, which recently secured funding of over €9.25m under the European Union’s PEACEPLUS programme.*

*“I commend Derry City and Strabane District Council and the PEACEPLUS Partnership that will oversee the development and delivery of this Action Plan. I am confident that the 58 localised community relations projects supported in this plan will result in purposeful, meaningful and sustained contact with others from different community, cultural and political backgrounds.*

*“I'm happy that my Department of Rural and Community Development, working with the Special EU Programmes Body and the Executive Office in Northern Ireland, will be able to support and fund this fantastic Action Plan to ensure its successful implementation, which will have a long-term and beneficial impact on the region.”*

**Speaking at the launch, SEUPB CEO Gina McIntyre, said**

*“I am very pleased to be here today to celebrate the launch of Derry City and Strabane District Council’s Local Co-Designed Action Plan. The Council’s programme, which was one of the first to be approved under PEACEPLUS Investment Area 1.1, reflects the legitimate and meaningful engagement which has taken place at local level. The 58 projects and initiatives that will be delivered under this programme are immensely exciting and diverse; and demonstrate the wide variety of ways in which the funding will be utilized to empower community connections and promote inclusivity, peace and reconciliation across the council area.”*

**Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council Cllr Lilian Seenoi spoke at the event. Welcoming the launch, she said:** *“As mayor, and as a member of the PEACE Board, I know the intensive co-design process which council and communities invested to reach this point. Today is ‘lift off’ for starting to roll out much needed peace and reconciliation funding to benefit local people and communities across our city and district. From Castlederg to Caw, Strathfoyle to Strabane, Creggan to Claudy we hope this programme will engage and bring together our diverse communities for the benefit of all.’*

**Catherine Cooke (Foyle Women’s Information Network / Chair of the PEACEPLUS Board.) said:** *“Today’s launch marks a huge milestone. The 58 tendered projects in the Co-Designed Local Action Plan will pour vital funding into local communities. Partnership working has brought us to this point and successful delivery will require groups to continue to work together. All the projects are cross-community in nature and aim to be ‘transformative’ to participants in building awareness of and respect for diversity and inclusion. All projects will be provided free to participants and the overall programme has been co-designed to be inclusive of key identities including different genders, ages, those impacted by the legacy of the past, Black and Minority Ethnic identities, disability, religion and sexual orientation.”*

**Martin Duffy (Derg Local Growth Partnership / Co-Chair of the PEACEPLUS Board) added:** *“Amongst the 58 projects is something for everyone - active environmentalism, cricket, outdoor pursuits, history, heritage, upcycling, music, dance, Irish language, farming, street art and much more. Whilst our programme is not strongly focused on capital works, we’re delighted to have included physical and shared space work around Park Community Hall, an Intercultural Café, a Food Poverty Kitchen and World War Memorials. There are also key projects offering community and voluntary sector training and volunteering opportunities, youth inclusion projects in rural and urban areas and projects empowering interface residents.”*

Sue Divin is Derry City and Strabane District Council’s PEACE Manager encouraged local community groups to look at the opportunities and tender to win the contracts. *“As well as the programme being launched today, we’d encourage groups to watch out for the Theme 1.2 Small Grants opportunities up to €100,000. These are separate to council’s programme so groups should watch for those opportunities on the SEUPB website and social media.”*

Anyone wishing to receive information about future Tendering opportunities under DCSDC Local Co-Designed Action Plan should visit the website and sign up for direct email updates on: <https://www.derrystrabane.com/community/peace-plus>

The Peace Team in Council can be reached via peace@derrystrabane.com

**Notes to Editors**

* The Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) is a North South Body with the statutory remit for managing EU funding programmes within Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland.
* PEACEPLUS is a cross-border funding Programme designed to support peace and prosperity across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. The total value of PEACEPLUS is €1.14 billion.
* PEACEPLUS is co-funded by the European Union, the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Government of Ireland, and the Northern Ireland Executive.