



St. Columb's Park House  
THE HEART IN THE PARK



ANNUAL REPORT  
**2023**



**St. Columb's Park House**  
THE HEART IN THE PARK

## OUR MISSION STATEMENT

To empower local people to become active citizens, changemakers and peacebuilders.

## OUR VALUES



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# CHAIRPERSONS ADDRESS

As chairperson of St. Columb's Park House it is an honor and a privilege to contribute to this annual report. At St Columbs Park House we continue to look at new ways to build a peaceful and shared society where involvement and participation enables everyone to have a say and a role in the creation of a better tomorrow for all of us.

Our core aims of People, Place and Peace are reflected in all our projects addressing the concept of "Peace Building" through the lens of an increasingly diverse community. It is key that we connect People to the Place they call home and that we all see our role in collectively sustaining Peace in the future.

Our "natural environment" is part and parcel of the reconciliation work that is now more than ever badly needed in our somewhat fractured society. The contribution that nature makes to our physical and mental well being is widely recognized and as a Peace Centre, we recognise and appreciate the interdependence and connectedness of people and nature.

I'd like to pay tribute to the wonderful work of our staff who continue to work on building, sustaining and maintaining peace across our City. I would also like to acknowledge the valuable input of our service users and volunteers who truly are the heart of St Columbs Park House.

Martin Doherty  
Chairperson



St. Columb's Park House  
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## MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR

2023 has been a really busy year here at the House. We continue to explore opportunities to connect people to place and to peace.

### OUR MISSION:

*To empower local people to become active citizens, changemakers and peacebuilders*

What we have all seen and experienced over the last few years pre and post pandemic and more worryingly what we are currently seeing in other parts of the world, shows us that peace is something that requires effort and commitment, not just of the few but from us all.

The pandemic made us think differently about our approach to peacebuilding and the need to place this in everyday life. A review of our strategy identified 3 core elements to sustaining and building a durable peace;

### PEOPLE

To connect people in a space where they feel valued and respected for who they are

### PLACE

To develop a sense of belonging and civic pride in a place we call home

### PEACE

To help build and nurture a peaceful society

We recognise and appreciate the challenges placed on communities today and through our programmes we support local people as we work through these challenges together.

It is important that as a community we see ourselves as peace builders, as changemakers, as people who can and do make a difference.

Peace must be rooted in our everyday lives.



Sharon Doherty  
Managing Director



## PROJECT TEAM



**LIAM NELIS**  
BLOOM GROUNDS  
& GARDENS



**BAYAN SMITH**  
BLOOM COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT



**MICHELLE SIMPSON**  
IGNYTE PROJECT  
CO-ORDINATOR



**DANIEL (PINTA) QUIGLEY**  
FIGHT FOR MYSELF PROJECT  
CO-ORDINATOR

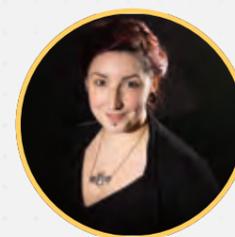


**DONNA MC FEELY**  
FUTURE LEADERS



**GRETTA DONAGHEY**  
CURRYNIERIN  
COMMUNITY WORKER

## FREELANCE TEAM



**RUTH MC CARTNEY**  
FREELANCE SUPPORT  
- HERITAGE FOR  
HEALTH PROJECT



**ROBIN CROUCH**  
FREELANCE SUPPORT -  
FUTURE LEADERS



**MICHAELA MC DAID**  
FREELANCE SUPPORT  
- HERITAGE FOR  
HEALTH PROJECT



**PADRAIG O'GRADA**  
FREELANCE  
WORKER

## HOUSE TEAM



**MICHELLE  
LOGUE**  
FINANCE OFFICER



**PAT  
MC FADDEN**  
FINANCE MANAGER



**SHARON  
DOHERTY**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR

## ARTIST IN RESIDENCE



Makey  
Uppers

**MAKEY UPPERS**  
**ARTIST IN RESIDENCE**  
**SORCHA SHANAHAN**  
**& GEMMA WALKER**



# Heritage 4 Health



**Heritage for Health was a partnership programme between St Columb's Park House and Waterside Neighbourhood Partnership Healthy Living Alliance designed to increase access to local heritage both built and natural.**

Post COVID we now know and fully understand that being outdoors and connecting with the natural environment

- boosts activity levels
- improves physical & mental health
- enhances our overall sense of wellbeing

Heritage 4 Health Goodie Bags



Peaking through the trees



Felting

The programme connected local people to local heritage places, skills and crafts. The programme included exploring and discovery of our natural heritage, our built heritage and heritage skills. The focus was on connecting our sense of self with an integrated idea of Heritage and what that meant on a personal level. Connection our personal experience with all three aspects. To explore this concept, we connected ideas of personal heritage, family trees, human development and narrative lines through history. We also delved into exploring our narratives around our "home place" and how that ties into a shared history of place. Through this lens the group spent time in nature, enjoying the local history and storytelling of St Columbs Park House, the grounds of the Park, Prehen Ancient Woods and of course St Columba and St Breacan.

The group explored the Park discovering the location of two holy wells, hearing

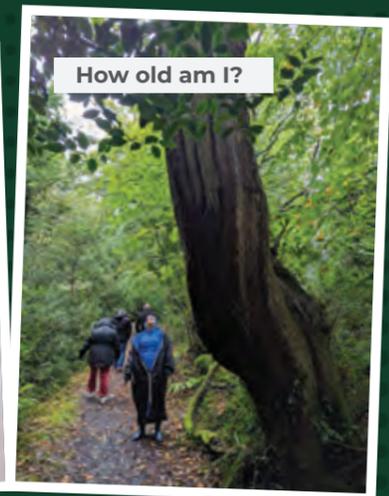
the story of St Breacan's Church, the oldest monastic building in the City, they had a guided visit of Prehen Woods hearing about the native trees and the contribution these make to our air quality, the history of the place and it's place within the city's larger narrative and it's meaning to the people who frequent it. They visited the Guildhall and the Tower Museum and heard many stories of our past and of course our more recent history.

For the intangible aspects of heritage we explored cultures of story-telling and song, shared tales around a camp fire and discussed how histories are kept, passed on and curated and ideas of how we can be caretakers of our own personal heritage as well as fitting into a greater narrative within our local and national histories. We met with members of the local History group and discussed ideas of place. We also met with a local singer from a long local singing tradition who headed a discussion and presentation on the history of song sharing and aural traditions.

The group enjoyed learning many new craft-based skills including spinning, felting, wood turning and whittling and had a real fascination with learning about bees and the many benefits bees bring to our natural environment beyond honey production. That said, the group were so invested in harvesting the honey from the hives at St Columb's Park House, 'real pots of gold' as they described them. These traditional skills were explored through a lens of historical practice, skills our ancestors would have used for survival, creative expression and continuation of skills. This gave us a great sense of connection with our past, our ancestors and of ideas of value in the skills we possess and pass on to future generations.



Honey Harvest



How old am I?



Wool Craft Workshop



The Guildhall



Tower Museum

# CURIOSITY CLUB

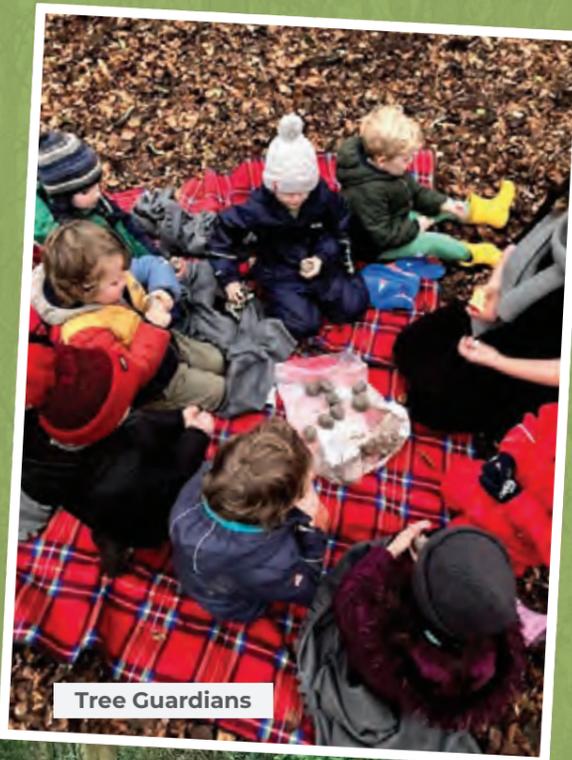
Curiosity Club is a nature exploration club for wee ones between 5 and 7 years old, we explored the wonder of nature in The Park, discovered what lives and grows in our surroundings and followed our curiosity.

For six weeks the children spent time outdoors, learning about the turning of the seasons, how to track the weather and understand the elements.

When exploring our space we learned about path finding and tracking, working as a team and taking care of our local wildlife.

## Together we

- searched for tadpoles in the pond and hedgehogs and squirrels in the hedgerows and trees
- learned how to use tools safely and built bird-houses for our feathered friends
- built habitat for bug life and shelters for ourselves and learned how to 'Leave No Trace' in nature when we left the woods
- planted seeds, learning to grow our own food, to understand where our food comes from and to watch them grow
- celebrated by learning to safely light and care for a fire and we toasted marshmallows in the woods under a big sky full of stars.



Tree Guardians



Fairy Garden

We all came away with a great sense of wonder in the natural world and plenty of new friends.



Making bird houses



Discovering our roots



Making things bigger



Firelighting



Certificates of completion



Just chilling



Climbing trees



# FUTURE LEADERS

Future Leaders is a leadership training programme that aims to encourage young people to actively engage in their communities, developing their confidence and leadership skills while building positive relations on a cross-border basis.

The programme provides a tiered pathway for young people aged 15-25 to develop the skills and confidence to work with others from diverse backgrounds and take an active role in peacebuilding and developing their own communities and wider society.

**The programme has 3 key elements which are:**

## Peace Making

- Personal Learning

## Peace Building

- Good Relations

## Peace Advocating

- Social Action



Future leaders 10ft Christmas Tree - learned how to plan and deliver a project, and some basic design and craft skills.

**"The residentials were the highlight for me. Although, even the weekly sessions were fun and creative."**

Future Leaders - Smore making at St Columb's Park House.

St Columbs Park House Future Leaders group twinned this year with CAPE Youth Project and Westside Youth Project in Galway. The group shared online learning sessions, in person events and travelled north and south of the border on residential.

The social action element of the project this year was delivered in partnership with a peer group from Pilots Row youth club and Eden Arts Project. They decided on an environmental project to highlight the issue of waste by re-using single-use plastic bottles as a material to build two striking 10ft Christmas trees for two shopping malls – one on each side of the river. Their second social action project was to renovate the pond in our Walled Garden.



Cliff climbing was at Oakfire Aventures.

**"I really enjoyed the programme, its fun and I met great people!"**

# IGNYTE!

The IgnYte programme is a Personal Youth Development Programme funded by The International Fund for Ireland.

The programme is now in its 6th year and our young people continue to develop their vocational skills, to focus on their personal development and have hosted The Agreement Exhibition as part of their Good Relations Training.

## LEVEL 2 & LEVEL 3 QUALIFICATIONS GAINED INCLUDE;

- Good Relations
- Assertiveness
  - First Aid
  - CSR Card (Construction Skills Register)
  - SIA Badge (Security Industry Authority)
- Customer Care
- Spectator Safety
- OCN Level 2 qualifications in Leadership
- OCN Level 1 in Internet Safety
- OCN Level 2 in Creative and Digital Media
- OCNNI Level 2 Assertiveness
- Supervisory Management

## SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The young people participating on IgnYte have been working on building a briefcase of generic qualifications and skills that will help them to secure employment across a range of industries including Hospitality, Retail and Entertainment. They have been engaging with local employers across a range of industries on a series of taster days enabling them to try new things, to experience the world of work that will hopefully enable them to progress further within that industry.



Fire Lighting

## CATALYST

As part of the focus on employability the young people have taken part in a new pilot project in partnership with Catalyst and the international fund. The project enabled our young people to become job ready. They took part in a series of workshops that built their confidence, that highlighted their strengths and built on those as a selling point for potential employers. It provided them with the opportunity to meet employers, to find out more about their industries and to work with those employers for a 12 week period. The young people had the opportunity to then interview with those employers for any suitable vacancies at the end of this trial period.

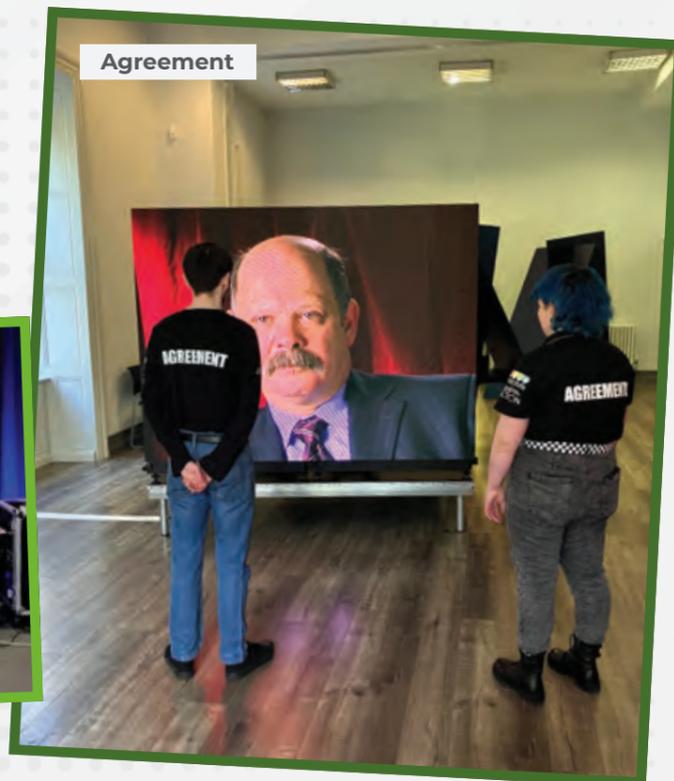
## GOOD RELATIONS

This year the programme worked with Ulster University in hosting the Agreement Exhibition. The group were one of 6 groups across Northern Ireland to host the artwork for a short period. As part of this project the young people took part in a series of workshops that included conversations about the principles of agreement and what the 'Good Friday' Agreement means to them today?

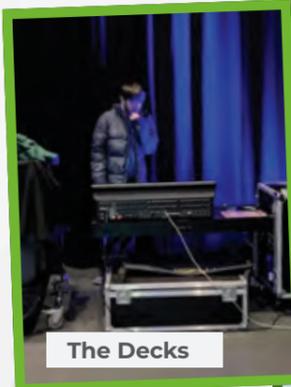
We are incredibly grateful for the partnership and ongoing support we receive from International Fund for Ireland as this allows us to provide tailor made programmes to suit the young people and allow them to progress at their own pace while ensuring that they achieve their goals and reach their full potential.

## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

This is a key part of the IgnYte project. The programme supports participants to re-connect with their peers, with society and builds confidence and resilience. It offers additional counselling support for those who struggle with their mental health and well being.



Agreement



The Decks

New Gate Cultural Arts Centre



Go Karting



Winners Podium



# THE BLOOM PROJECT

The BLOOM Project will use nature as a vehicle to promote the development and growth of personal and community resilience. The key to positive relationships, resilience and sustainable well-being is through connection.

## BLOOM WILL

- Create an awareness of the benefits of being outdoors.
- Create a 'getting outdoors' culture, seeing the Park as a place of sanctuary and solace, adventure and exploration creating a value for our natural environment
- Create a space where we ALL belong, have a role to play and our contribution is valued

Praxis – adults with learning disabilities planting out and maintaining the peace garden



Children from Lincoln Courts enjoying outdoor sessions on a brisk winter evening

## ORGANISATIONS WE HAVE COLLABORATED WITH:

- DEEDS
- Pink Ladies (Hive)
  - Praxis
  - Rainbow
- Derry Disk Golf
  - MakeyUppers
- Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir
- Oak Grove Integrated
  - Radius Housing
    - U3A
- City of Derry Horticulture Society
  - PBNi
- Caw & Nelson Drive Community Association
  - Bond St Resident Association
- CALMS – Thyme to Sing Community Choir
  - Parkinsons UK (Foyle Branch)
- Waterside Neighbourhood Partnership
  - Health Living Alliance
- Occupational Therapy Team (WHSCT)
  - Waterside sure start
- Lincoln courts community centre
  - Play Trail
- Derry and District Beekeepers Association
  - Eden Arts



Planting the pond with Hive



Summer Market

## APPROACH

Although we have 5 acres of public garden and shared spaces to develop and maintain, there is no gardener as such. Rather, we are able to do this through workshops that have a 2-fold benefit model as their organising principle. That is, groups come and benefit from a workshop whilst at the same time helping to maintain and/or develop the gardens.

The benefit to participants can come in many ways – learning a new skill such as woodwork or gardening, meeting new people, getting exercise, learning about nature, discovering outdoor play and realising its a free space with infinite possibilities.

The benefit to the park is that the gardens are maintained and points of interest are created, for example – the peace garden at the front, the garden of reflection, the walled garden, and then all the general maintenance, planting, weeding etc that's associated with that.



Making strawberry planters with Hive



# GARDEN GUARDIANS

This is a group of volunteers who meet twice a week, on Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings to work collectively on their 'masterplan' for the restoration of the gardens at St Columbs Park House

They are working across the grounds of the house but primarily in the Walled Garden which was restored as part of a PEACE IV project in 2019/2020 in partnership with Derry City & Strabane District Council. The group have developed a plan for the garden that includes a potager garden area combining flowers and herbs, a herb wheel, a wild flower border, fruit trees and raised beds.

The volunteers are from across the City and are supported in their work by both the Probation Service and a group of volunteers from the University of the 3rd Age (U3A). The group range in age from as young as 14 years old to 60+ volunteering their time and energy to restore the gardens, to create colourful and welcoming spaces for us all to enjoy.

The Garden Guardians volunteer their time all year round, planting and growing on from seed that they harvest from one year to the next. They have a seed library and plant swap that enables local people to avail of free seeds, to share plants that we have an abundance of and to receive any donations from local gardeners that we could use in the gardens and grounds.



## CONGRATULATIONS!!

This year we were delighted to have won the Innovative Community Engagement Award as part of the Council's Britain in Bloom Award, all possible because of the work of the volunteers, Probation Service and other local community groups who participate in some of our programmes.

25 ORGANISATIONS

1,222 PEOPLE



11,313 HOURS OF ENGAGEMENT



# CURRYNIERIN

St Columbs Park House have an outreach worker dedicated to working in Currynierin. Based at the community centre in the heart of the estate, the community worker is responsible for the programme and community development within the area.

There have been a number of key projects this year including:

- The renovation of the garage area into a youth hub providing a drop in centre during the day and later evening 5 days a week for teenagers, as well as a youth club 3 days a week for 5-16 year olds. Funded by Awards for All the renovation turned an unusable area into a multifunctional community space within the estate.
- The development of a community garden and mens shed facility in the old allotment area adjacent to the centre. Still in the very early stages of development, this space will provide an opportunity to develop a mens shed and an intergenerational gardening programme.
- Warm Hub for older people has provided a space for older people to meet and to have a warm meal or just a cuppa and a chat with their neighbours. It has enable residents to come together, to hear about whats happening in terms of support and programming in the state as well as being able to save on energy costs etc
- The Booster Programme has supported children in an after schools setting with



additional tutoring, especially those working on transfer tests or GCSE's. This additional support has helped the young people in terms of their confidence and ability as well as easing pressure on parents who struggle to support their children with homework etc

- The Community Worker has been establishing partnerships with key stakeholders to ensure that the centre offers a wrap around support service for all residents as well as building connections and relationships at the interface with the Tullyally Community Partnership worker.
- The Support Service Hub has included the provision of advice from organisations such as The Churches Trust, Foyle Food Bank, Action for Children, Sure Start, Dove House, Jobs and Benefits Office



FFM is a martial arts and sport based programme being delivered in HMP Magilligan Prison and funded by the Triangle Trust. The programme uses the ethos and disciplines of the sport to support young offenders control anger, manage anxiety and builds skills that nurture respect and honors your opponent.

The programme delivers sessions twice a week across four key elements



HOURS OF SPORT TRAINING

200

HOURS OF EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

120

**1.** Sport - martial arts training uses the disciplines and ethos of mixed martial arts to develop respect, to support attitudinal change and to control anxiety and anger.

**2.** Self-awareness and personal development component helps participants develop personal coping mechanisms to manage attitude and behaviour. It is integrated explicitly with the sport and fitness component and includes support sessions, and one-to-one mentoring for each participant.

**3.** Employability component includes a personal SWOT analysis, identifying job interest practical job apply skills, industry talks, a job fair and employer matching process. It also includes a comprehensive training pathway plan for each participant, including education, employment and/or training options

**4.** Through-the-gate support provides a tiered system of support on release for a period of 3 months, weighted to support participants in the initial weeks after release including setting up bank accounts, benefits, re-integration, continuing sport, implementing their bridge to employment pathway plans to include work experience and placement with local employers and a guaranteed interview on completion.

Participants will work on a range of generic qualifications that will support them into employment and/or further education once released.

Participants report their mental health and challenges with anxiety and depression are much improved as a result of the programme. The prison service report a drop in adjudications related to behaviour and drug taking amongst those participating in the programme.

# MOVING PEACE FORWARD

Moving Peace Forward is a dialogue project funded by the International Fund for Ireland under their Our Peace Our Future Initiative.

## AIM:

To celebrate successful grassroots peace building by civil society in the last 25 years, and to look forward to the next 25 years, by exploring how communities can work together to foster peace and reconciliation in a meaningful way.

Moving Peace Forward created a holistic approach to exploring peacebuilding in the future. Combining the skills and location of St Columbs Park Reconciliation Trust and our partner Community Dialogue the project explored 3 key questions in a series of dialogues and conversations with a wide cross section of people and groups.

What does Peace look like today? – is it just about two tribes? can we make the link between a healthy and vibrant community and Peace.

What does community look like in NI today? – explored the emergence of diversity in NI's cultural, religious, racial and gender base, something that probably wasn't present 25/30 years ago and certainly not to the extent it is true today.

How can this community shape Peace in the future? – what can and does this changing face of community bring to Peace – will our problems still be about community background in 25 years time? Will it still be about green and orange?



# BACK LANES

Funded by the Asset Recovery Community Scheme this project engaged 2 local schools, Oakgrove Integrated Primary School and Glendermott Primary School to re-imagine spaces that are disused, working together to bring these spaces to life.

The project encourages the children :

- to care for their local environment,
- to connect to their local area
- to give something back to the community
- to explore the outdoors
- to discover how nature can improve our physical and mental well-being.

The children worked on a number of projects including building raised beds, painting and planting and creating areas that were more welcoming in their community.





# St. Columb's Park House

THE HEART IN THE PARK

## PARTNERS & FUNDERS



An Roinn Gnóthaí  
Eachtracha agus Trádála  
Department of  
Foreign Affairs and Trade



Derry City & Strabane  
District Council  
Cathair Chathair &  
Chathair in Strabane Dáil  
Derry City & Strabane  
District Council



**St. Columb's Park House**  
4 Limavady Road  
Waterside  
Derry / Londonderry  
BT47 6JY

+44 (0)28 7134 3080

stcolumbsparkhouse

[www.stcolumbsparkhouse.org](http://www.stcolumbsparkhouse.org)