

## *Derry, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom*

### **Community enterprise counters poverty and conflict in the Creggan**

The GOAL project is a grassroots initiative which aims to heal divisions across the divided communities in Derry and across the border in County Donegal. Led by Creggan Neighbourhood Partnership, the project is located in dense structures and networks of community organisation which have evolved from a cooperative social economy model set up over 20 years ago by Creggan Enterprises Ltd.

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The GOAL project is a grassroots initiative mobilising the divided Catholic/Nationalist and Protestant/Loyalist communities in Derry and across the border in County Donegal. The aim of the project is to promote reconciliation and a sense of shared community to replace the historic pattern of conflict and social segregation. The project targets groups directly affected by the conflict including former prisoners and their support groups, victims and their families and communities. Activities include: cultural awareness and community relations training; exchanges and visits involving cross-border and cross-community groups; young and older people working together on research and awareness projects, and exhibitions and interpretation of history in local communities.

Creggan Neighbourhood Partnership, the lead partner in GOAL, is an umbrella structure of community organisations and runs a number of inter-linked social and community initiatives in the neighbourhood. All four partner organisations in GOAL are strongly community and volunteer-based. GOAL and associated projects are implemented in the wider community infrastructure, Creggan Enterprises. Creggan Enterprises, in operation now for over 20 years, evolved from a community-led drive for jobs and regeneration in one of Northern Ireland's most rundown, neglected and conflict-ridden neighbourhoods, the Catholic/Nationalist Creggan. It established and now manages a retail and enterprise park and community facilities – the Ráth Mór Centre and Business Park – using a social economy model. Results have been impressive in terms of direct investment into the Creggan (over €12 million), jobs for local people (290 direct jobs) and commitment to community empowerment and ownership and healing divisions. The structures of community organisation in the Creggan face many challenges, not least those presented by the current economic crisis, tighter public funding budgets as well as ongoing challenges to the peace process.

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The Creggan housing estate and the adjoining neighbourhood of the Bogside in Derry are perhaps best known as hotbeds of community conflict during the years of the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland. Images of 'Bloody Sunday', 30th January 1972, when unarmed civil rights protesters in the Bogside were shot dead by British soldiers, were projected all over the world.

The Creggan was the first estate built in Derry to provide social housing for the Catholic majority of the city. It sits on a hillside on the western outskirts of the city, only 3 km from the border with County Donegal in the Republic of Ireland. Derry is the natural urban centre for the North West region of Northern Ireland/Republic of Ireland but its prosperity has been greatly restricted by the border and the history of the 'Troubles'. The Creggan estate is one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Derry and in Northern Ireland. However, over a long period of time, the local community has organised itself, in a spirit of self-help and empowerment, to respond to problems of economic decline, social deprivation and sectarian conflict. In more recent years, this has included real efforts to heal the wounds of the past and build a shared sense of community, across the political and sectarian divide and with neighbouring communities across the border. Given its history, this is a most significant achievement.

This story of community-led development in the Creggan is woven around the experience of Creggan Enterprises and the Creggan Neighbourhood Partnership, including the specific example of the GOAL (Gaining Opportunities to Address Legacies) project, which was assisted by the ERDF in the framework of the PEACE III programme (2007-2013).

#### *Mobilisation and the cooperative structure*

The origins of Creggan Enterprises Ltd can be traced back to 1984, with the sudden closure of the Molins factory by its multinational owners, and the loss 437 jobs. In protest, the trade union official at Molins, with some colleagues, organised an occupation of the factory and a public awareness campaign. They set up a civic group which eventually purchased the Molins site and went on to establish an employee-owned company, Maydown Precision Engineering (MPE), which is still in existence. The experience showed the power of community action in what was essentially a ravaged community, and was drawn upon in setting up Creggan Enterprises as a social economy initiative.

In 1986, a group of local people formed Creggan Community Initiative. They visited cooperatives in the region, mobilised some 150 local people and convinced them of the potential of starting a social economy venture using a cooperative structure. As an indication of the prevailing apathy at that time, at the first meeting of residents, only six people (from a catchment community of some 12 000 residents) turned up. From this process of community mobilisation, Creggan Co-operative Society was established. The small group of activists, mainly from trade union backgrounds, challenged the statutory sector that had neglected the community. They went on to buy land owned by the Industrial Development Board (IDB) which had been derelict for 20 years, as the IDB was unable to attract inward investment to the site. The site had symbolic and emotional significance in the Creggan. It was part of the industrial history of the Creggan in that it was a 'box factory' which closed in the 1960s resulting in large job losses. The factory was burnt down, and later used as an army

encampment for British soldiers in the 1970s. With this history, the site became a focal point for the civil rights movement in Derry. At one point, local residents occupied the factory to show that this was the site they wanted for the social economy initiative.

Through local fund-raising, Creggan Cooperative Society raised the resources to put a deposit on the land (£65,000 / €80,000). Later, they attracted funding support from the International Fund for Ireland (£1.35m / €1.64m), matched by an equal amount from the Department of the Environment NI. Each of these funders provided 40% grant aid, with the community expected to raise the remaining 20% (£600,000 / €728,600). This was partly raised from the community and partly by bank financing. The total funding package was used to develop an enterprise and retail park, formally established in 1991, as Ráth Mór Centre and Business Park.

Today, Creggan Enterprises Ltd (CEL) seeks to address the legacy of exclusion, market failures, urban decline and community conflict in the Creggan and surrounding neighbourhoods. It does this by stimulating investment, encouraging community and employee entrepreneurship, creating and maintaining jobs and building the skills and capacity of local people. Its principles are:

- community empowerment and participation, building assets for community advancement
- developing services to meet community needs by engaging with people in addressing their own needs
- promoting local skills, community ownership and commitment to community-led action
- generating financial and social profits for the community
- providing pathways to social inclusion and work for socially disadvantaged people
- anti-discrimination and promotion of equal opportunities

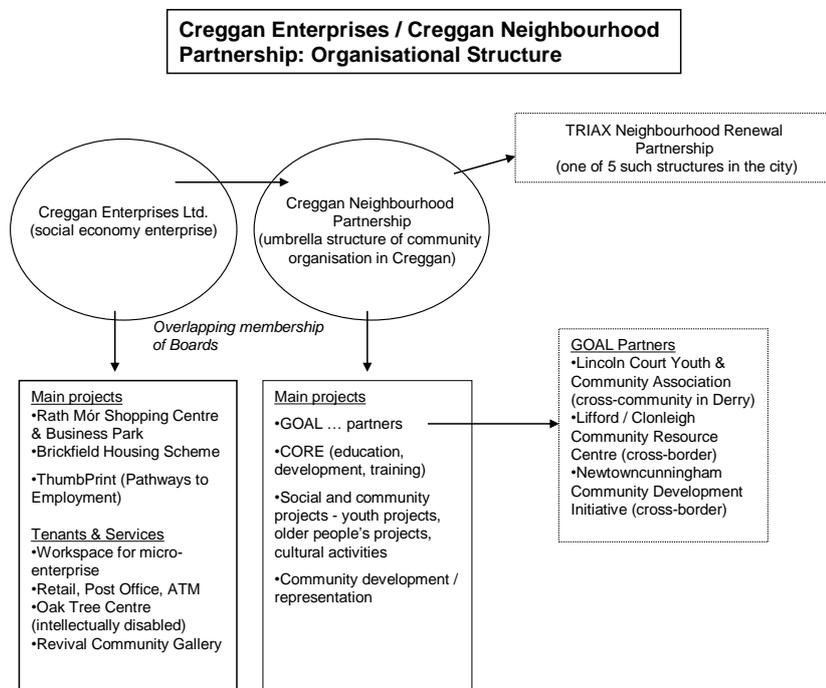


The activities pursued by Creggan Enterprises are centred on the Ráth Mór Centre and Business Park, a development of approximately 10 000 sq. m. which provides premises for businesses, public services, community and social projects and workspace for micro-enterprises. Tenants include a supermarket (Cost-cutter) and retail outlets, community service units including a day centre for adults with learning difficulties (Oak Tree Centre), a

day nursery and an out-of-school project. A new school building has been located on the same site, and nextdoor Creggan Enterprises has developed a social housing complex. Creggan Enterprises also delivers ThumbPrint, a 'Pathway to Employment' initiative, targeted at social groups distant from the mainstream labour market.

## A vehicle for community projects

In 1992-93, Creggan Enterprises was a partner in the establishment of Creggan Neighbourhood Partnership (CNP), which was set up following a successful application for EU funding. Both organisations went on to play an important role in implementing the URBAN Community Initiative in Derry in 1994-99. CNP is an umbrella organisation which supports the capacity building of grassroots community organisations and implements social initiatives in the local community. At the time it was set up, there was no community infrastructure in the Creggan. Community organisations had collapsed because they were manipulated as a focus for conflict during the years of the 'Troubles'. Over the years, Creggan Enterprises provided training and advice to the Partnership. The two organisations work closely together and in complementary fields of activity – Creggan Enterprises promoting and supporting enterprise, business and employment, and Creggan Neighbourhood Partnership supporting community organisation and running social and community projects. There is cross-membership of the boards of both organisations.



CNP is the delivery structure for the GOAL project (Gaining Opportunities to Address Legacies) which operates from an office at Ráth Mór. TRIAX, the Neighbourhood Partnership Board for the communities of Creggan, Bogside, Brandywell, the Fountain and Bishop's Street (cross-community) is affiliated to CNP. TRIAX operates with a neighbourhood management team involving stakeholders across the public, private and community / voluntary sectors in the implementation of an Action Plan for Neighbourhood Renewal. There are five urban renewal partnerships in Derry and a regeneration company for Derry (ILEX). Other projects delivered by Creggan Neighbourhood Partnership in addition to GOAL include CORE, a back to education project with integrated personal development for unemployed and inactive groups who are most excluded, a youth drop-in centre, an over-50s social project, and the Re-imagining public art project.

### *Communities address the legacy of the past*

Promoting community projects from grassroots level and building reconciliation to create a normalised society which accepts diversity is a key role of Creggan Neighbourhood Partnership. GOAL's overall aim was to provide opportunities for reconciliation by building positive lasting relationships across communities in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland. Its objectives were:

- To promote equality, conflict resolution and mediation within the community and establish cross-community and cross-border partnerships with specific groups;
- To raise awareness and acceptance of the rich cultural diversity across the city and in the Border Region;
- To work towards understanding and healing communities coming out of the 30 years of conflict;
- To address the needs of victims, their relatives and carers on an ongoing basis and to ensure their voices are heard.

GOAL was part-funded by the ERDF under PEACE III, and ran from October 2008 till December 2011. At the time of the GOAL application, Creggan Neighbourhood Partnership had been involved for over five years in peace-building programmes, and had developed relationships with community groups across the city from other traditions and cross-border. The groups which partnered with Creggan Neighbourhood Partnership on GOAL were: Lincoln Courts Youth and Community Resource Centre (Protestant/Loyalist), Lifford/Clonleigh Community Resource Centre, Donegal (cross-border), and later Newtowncunningham Community Development Initiative (cross-border and mixed).

GOAL promoted inter-generational and multi-generational learning about the past history of conflict. Activities included: cultural awareness and community relations training; joint exchanges and visits by cross-border and cross-community groups and residents; young and older people working together on joint research and awareness projects; exhibitions of research on specific events or personalities and interpretation of history displayed in different community venues; community relations, history, cultural awareness and research courses; joint drama, digital and written documentation of communities' experiences, developed as a learning tool for future generations; and international links and exchanges with communities in conflict in other parts of the EU.

GOAL was implemented by a team comprising three project workers employed by CNP and also some paid workers and many volunteers in all four partner organisations. Currently (2011), CNP has 14 staff and 13 volunteers. GOAL operated within the governance structure of CNP.

A sub-committee involving staff and volunteers of CNP and partner organisations had an input into the project's design, structure, specification of activities and style of delivery of the project. GOAL first mobilised residents and communities through a series of consultations, and they were subsequently involved in creating and designing the project – for instance, articulating their needs, providing ideas on structure and style of activities etc. Volunteers were trained to engage in the organisation of activities. All partner organisations in GOAL are strongly community based – they were initiated by local people, have been built up over many years and are strongly voluntary-based. All are run by voluntary management committees. For instance, Lifford/Clonleigh is wholly voluntary in that it has no core state funding. Lincoln Courts Youth and Community Centre is also mainly voluntary – it has one part-time youth worker. Several personnel involved in actual project delivery – for

instance, in the partner organisations such as Lincoln Courts and Lifford/Clonleigh Community Resource Centre – were volunteers. This mix of paid workers (in the GOAL team) and voluntary effort was discussed and agreed from the outset to avoid any potential for conflict in the course of implementation.

### ***Building on the peace process: the political and strategic context***

PEACE III 2007-2013 is the latest in a succession of EU programmes since 1995 to support the peace process, following the announcement of ceasefires by the main paramilitary organisations in 1994. Multi-party talks involving the Irish and UK government and representatives of both communities culminated in the political agreement, known as the 'Good Friday Agreement' or 'Belfast Agreement' in April 1998. The agreement restored devolved government to Northern Ireland on a power-sharing basis. Linked to it, a number of joint North-South implementation bodies were established including the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), the managing authority of PEACE and the Cross-Border Territorial Cooperation Programme (INTERREG IVA). Since the agreement, there have been difficulties with specific issues (such as the decommissioning of arms) and in institutional arrangements. Devolved governance (the Northern Ireland Assembly) was suspended for a time owing to disagreements between the main parties representing the divided communities.

PEACE III is included under the European Territorial Co-operative Objective, and is funded solely by the ERDF. It is one of three operational programmes in Northern Ireland (one ERDF, one ESF and one Territorial Cooperation) and one of four operational programmes in Ireland (two regional OPs funded by ERDF, one ESF, and one Territorial Cooperation OP). The eligible area for PEACE III is Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland, the latter comprising the counties Louth, Monaghan, Cavan, Leitrim, Sligo and Donegal. PEACE III has a greater focus on reconciliation compared with previous PEACE programmes. The strategic objectives centre on two priorities: reconciling communities and contributing to a shared society. Activities with a stronger economic focus, including labour market interventions, are funded from other EU programmes or national initiatives.

Notwithstanding improvements in community relations, Northern Ireland remains a divided society, whose divisions are deeply rooted historically. Religion is a powerful marker for national identity but, in itself, is not a cause of the conflict. Residential patterns and institutions such as schools remain highly segregated, and there is a lack of shared space and shared services. There are contentious 'interface areas' – physical barriers constructed between communities that live side-by-side with each other – including a number of 'peace lines' in Derry. Dissident paramilitary groups are still active and resistant to the new context of 'peace'. The legacy is lack of cross-community contact, low levels of participation in society, isolation and poor social integration.

### ***Sustaining motivation, addressing the challenges***

The reason the GOAL partners got involved was to provide 'the space' to have conversations about the past and to enable relationship-building. Partner organisations emphasised difficulties in building trust and relationships across communities. There is still opposition to the peace process (including dissident organisations), and there is still apathy and fear of interacting with communities from other traditions, whether in Northern Ireland or across the border. It was seen to be particularly important to engage with young people, to broaden participation by this group which represents the future of society. Indeed, it emerged that most young people in GOAL had never interacted with their peers from the other tradition prior to their involvement in the project.

There were challenges during project implementation which required refocusing activities amongst the partners and target groups in the communities. For instance, the cross-border group, Lifford/Clonleigh Community Resource Centre (Donegal), did not have a youth worker in place to support the involvement of young people in GOAL. Instead, the group concentrated on involving adults while another cross-border group, Newtowncunningham Community Development Initiative (Donegal), was brought into the partnership to focus on young people, across communities and cross-border. Another issue was the administrative demands and procedures applied by the Implementation Body and the managing authority, which were regarded as challenging. Consultations with community organisations indicate that procedures for application to and participation in Peace III (reporting, payment schedules and arrangements) are well beyond the capacity of small voluntary community organisations. The capacity of the lead partner, Creggan Neighbourhood Partnership, with the support of Creggan Enterprises, was crucial in addressing the demands of project administration and management.

### *Innovation in local community organisation*

Creggan Enterprises set up a social economy model at a time when these approaches were not well-known or practiced in Northern Ireland. There were many risks and obstacles at the time – Creggan was a ‘hotbed’ of conflict, the community was resistant to the state and there was no investment or prospect of it into the community but rather a process of private sector flight. The initiative challenged the public sector but also worked to bring the mainstream public and private sector along with it. Creggan Enterprises pioneered a new approach in the social economy sector. As evidence of its influence, many of the leading arts, cultural and social projects in the city (e.g. Verbal Arts Centre, Playhouse Theatre, and the Nerve Centre) are set up as social economy initiatives modelled on Creggan Enterprises. Creggan Enterprises worked to build a legal social structure to represent the community and at the same time be acceptable to business. It secured property and investment from banks and government, and attracted retail and small business to the neighbourhood; it developed community service units, created a social housing complex and worked to build up a complex structure of community engagement from the grass-roots. Creggan Neighbourhood Partnership grew out of Creggan Enterprises’s mission to support community development initiatives and appropriate vehicles to further such development.

Creggan Enterprises’ description of the values and principles of social economy enterprises

Social economy enterprises have governance structures based on core values and principles associated with a co-operative enterprise mechanism and participation by workers and/or the community that aim to improve the quality of personal and community life. The social economy promotes:

- economic activities with social goals
- social and economic benefits for individuals and communities
- cooperation and solidarity
- mutuality
- employee and community ownership and control of local economic resources
- social and economic inclusion
- sustainable communities and economies
- equality of opportunity

Creggan Enterprises submission: A framework to assist economic recovery: the Social Enterprise Support Unit, February 2012

The GOAL project has furthered community-led development and partnership focused on cross-community and cross-border cooperation. The project has engaged with groups (including victims, ex-prisoners and ex-paramilitaries) who were not previously involved in such activities, and has prioritised engagement with young people. As such, it worked to broaden community participation to new groups and to engage with people with entrenched views characterised by intolerance, including some on the extremes of community conflict (ex-prisoners and dissidents).



The experience of Creggan Enterprises (social economy) and Creggan Neighbourhood Partnership (initiatives to promote reconciliation) has been brought to a wider audience. GOAL linked with other conflict areas in the EU including Kosovo and the Balkans, while Creggan Enterprises recently advised authorities in Christchurch, New Zealand on community-based approaches following the earthquake.

### *What results have been achieved?*

Funding for the GOAL project involved a total grant approval of €428 941 (£353 233) in 2008 from Peace III. To date, €403 812 (£332 539) has been paid, involving a €289 721 (£238 585) EU contribution and €139 221 (£114 648) from other public funds.

Creggan Enterprises, over the years, has generated private and public investment of approximately €12.14 million (£10 million) into the Creggan. Financially, it is self-sustaining. There has been no problem in accommodating on one site commercial and social economy enterprises and public or voluntary agencies providing services to the community. All tenants pay rent to Creggan Enterprises, which maintains the business park. Social economy enterprises benefit from mentoring and other support services offered by Creggan Enterprises. As it is a social economy company, any profits are reinvested in the local community, and Creggan Enterprises has clear social objectives.

Over the three-year duration of the GOAL project (2008-2011), 2 564 people participated in activities and actual participation exceeded targets. Fifty events including workshops were held. Evaluations confirm positive changes in attitudes in terms of cross-community and cross-border relations, including evidence of greater awareness and understanding of different cultures and traditions, more willingness to engage with people from different political and cultural background, greater interest in and learning from the past, improved recognition of mutual needs of communities affected by the conflict, and improved conflict resolution and mediation skills in the community.

The main results of Creggan Enterprises, in quantitative terms, are outlined below.

- The Business Centre, until recently, was fully occupied and an 18-year lease has been agreed with its 'anchor' tenant (the Costcutter supermarket). It houses approximately 60 businesses and community enterprises and it is

estimated that some 3 million people have used the services at the Ráth Mór Centre.

- Creggan Enterprises brought retail and business activities, jobs, services and new investment to the Creggan, estimated at €12.143 million (£10 million). This includes the Ráth Mór Centre, €3.9 million (£3.2 million); an Indigenous Business Park, €850 030 (£700 000), the Micro-Enterprise Centre, €485 732 (£400 000), and the Business Centre, €728 598 (£600 000). In addition, some €3.6 million (£3 million) has been spent on a social housing scheme and ThumbPrint, a major Pathways to Employment intermediate labour market programme is being delivered, €607 165 (£500 000).
- 293 new jobs have been created at Ráth Mór, generating some €3.64 million (£3 million) a year in wages. Approximately 120 temporary jobs were created during the construction of the housing complex and community service units.
- Over €243 000 (£200 000) has been allocated to local groups and schools.
- The relocation of the Post Office and an ATM cash dispenser service at Ráth Mór – the first such banking facility in the Creggan and Bogside neighbourhoods – were secured. Many cultural and arts projects have been set up including the Revival Community Gallery and Annual Festival, the Eastway Wall Art Project and recently a new Digital Arts project attracting young people to the Centre.
- Creggan Enterprises and Creggan Neighbourhood Partnership have activated statutory, social economy and private sector partnership and collaboration. They have brought new population groups (young people, older people, people with intellectual disabilities) and people from both traditions into the local environment, interacting socially at Ráth Mór whether shopping, working or attending social, cultural, education or training activities.

### *What is transferable to other areas?*

Elements of the project, such as the social economy model, are transferable to other areas. The specific social economy model including the legal structure of Creggan Enterprises has been transferred or applied to other projects in Derry city, and indeed the model is considered influential in Northern Ireland and more widely.

Creggan Enterprises is now at the centre of a cluster of inter-linked projects, set up as a multi-layered infrastructure of community organisation. This has developed over a long period of time. Its experience is based on working with key principles including community participation in decision-making, ongoing capacity building, self-help, a local focus for investment and jobs, reinvestment in the community. The model has involved taking advantage of new opportunities (e.g. the cessation of conflict, the overarching political agreement in Northern Ireland, public funding for peace and reconciliation building) and, at the same time, addressing identified local needs. This has enabled the project to diversify into new areas of activity, new structures and networks, new groups in the population (older people, young people, people with disabilities etc.) and more scope for integration and inter-linkage. This approach to the evolution of a complex project is transferable. An ongoing strategy of capacity building has also been a further important supportive factor.

The model is potentially transferable, particularly in the context of integrated actions in urban neighbourhoods with problems of multiple deprivation. The community building and reconciliation dimension that is developed in GOAL could also be transferable to local areas with problems of divided communities, for instance, due to difficulties in relationships between communities with different ethnic origins, cultures

or religions. The lessons from GOAL are that activities to bring communities together need to be developed from a deep understanding of the impact of conflict in communities (the victims, those directly involved in conflict) and require efforts to reach and engage those with most entrenched views. The experience of GOAL has been of interest to other areas in Europe coming out of serious ethnic conflict, namely the Balkans and Kosova. The transnational exchange of experience (study visits, conference, workshops) has been particularly successful here.

Local leadership, risk-taking, a capacity for negotiation and compromise, powers of persuasion and a strong sense of local identity and commitment to place are more intangible 'soft' factors that are not easily implanted.

### *A slowly evolving model*

The cluster of projects at Creggan (Ráth Mór Centre) is impressive. The structure of community organisation and the social economy model have evolved from a long process of community mobilisation. It is an evolving model. There are now complementary community-based structures (economic, social, umbrella, grassroots) as well as the financial autonomy, credibility and confidence to try to new things. The community leaders have shown their commitment to community empowerment from the grassroots, community ownership and distribution of benefits of the enterprise to the local community. Key success factors in the experiences of Creggan Enterprises (CEL) and Creggan Neighbourhood Partnership (CNP) are outlined below.

The experience highlights the importance of community ownership of knowledge, land, buildings and resources rather than total reliance on grant aid. Financial viability increases credibility with the private sector and gives the enterprise autonomy. Securing bank financing for investment showed the confidence of financial stakeholders. As the project evolved with a track record of success, inward investors increasingly approached CEL to explore the possibility of joint ventures.

Community effort and leadership by local people who are passionate about their community was crucial to the establishment of, and sustained engagement in, Creggan Enterprises. Furthermore the people involved were not adverse to risk and were prepared to take a long-term view.

An enabling and supportive environment, not just in terms of funding but also in the regional planning context, is required to support integrated social, economic and community regeneration. Creggan Enterprises drew on expertise and training from the Social Economy Agency and on the expertise of its voluntary board of directors. Training helped with business planning and legal structures and built local capacity.

Collaborative partnership, networking and coalition building – which involved lobbying for change rather than accepting the current thinking of the public and private sectors – was a further characteristic of the approach. The experience emphasises the importance of partnership entered into on an equal footing. CEL found that community representatives need training and mentoring in how to engage with the private and statutory sector, while private and statutory sectors need training and greater awareness of the core values and principles of the social economy movement.

It has to be admitted that there was an element of luck in the success in terms of funding being available at key stages – for instance, from the International Fund for Ireland, from the EU in the early 1990s and from successive PEACE programmes and other sources. The experience shows the need to be entrepreneurial to take advantage of opportunities when they arise.

The community leaders recognise the need for a process of diversification to address new challenges and respond to local needs, which change over time. Issues for the

future include: more difficult economic circumstances, tighter public funding regimes and budgets, the need for ongoing engagement with young people in particular, and leadership succession in the management structures of Creggan Enterprises and associated structures. Short-termism in public policy programmes to address community, social and economic disadvantage is a further challenge. The experience of Creggan shows that strategic and long-term interventions, multiple approaches which involve many different types of action to meet different needs in local communities, are needed to bring about lasting change and a trajectory of economic and social progress.

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