



T:BUC Engagement Forum

Uniting Communities through Sport and Creativity

11 February 2020
9.30am -1.30pm
The Armagh City Hotel

Contributors:

Dr Mark Browne (MB) - Director of Strategic Policy, Equality & Good Relations, The Executive Office (TEO) and Chair of the T:BUC Engagement Forum

Cllr. Mealla Campbell - Lord Mayor of Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council

Declan Kearney MLA (DK) - Junior Minister in the Executive

Gordon Lyons MLA (GL) - Junior Minister in the Executive

Kathryn Hill (KH) - Director of Active Communities, DfC

Johnny Davis (JD) – Head of Operations NI, Dame Kelly Holmes Trust

Pearse Smith (PS) – Young Ambassadors Programme / Uniting Communities

Nicole Breslin (NB) – Young Ambassadors Programme / PeacePlayers International

Diarmaid Marsden (DM) – Head of Community Development, Ulster GAA

Michael Boyd (MBd) - Director of Football Development, Irish Football Association Foundation

Kris Lindsay (KL) - Project and Finance Manager, Irish Football Association's PEACE IV Sport Uniting Communities Programme

Nathan (N) - Stay Onside Ambassador

Gareth Harper (GH) – Managing Director, PeacePlayers NI

Amiee (AJ) **McMinn** – PeacePlayers NI

Rachel Madden – PeacePlayers NI

Introduction and Welcome

Dr Mark Browne, Deputy Permanent Secretary with responsibility for Good Relations and Equality, noting the adverse weather, welcomed attendees to the Engagement Forum.

Dr Browne welcomed and invited Lord Mayor of Armagh City , Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, Councillor Mealla Campbell, to say a few words of welcome.

Councillor Mealla Campbell, Lord Mayor of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council welcomed attendees to the Engagement Forum and thanked the Community Relations Council, the Executive Office and the Community Development Team from ABC Council for facilitating discussions.

Cllr Campbell emphasised the role of Local Government and the Community of Armagh's long and distinguished record of working together for the common good; suggesting there was no better place than in the city of Armagh, in the shadow of the two cathedrals of St. Patrick, to engage and discuss strategies to work collectively and in partnership to build united communities.

Noting that the Engagement Forum's theme of uniting communities through sport and creativity, Cllr Campbell stated she sees the potential and the power to unite people through sport more so than any other mechanism. Regardless of age, gender or background, sport is enjoyed by all, and its reach is unrivalled. Sport promotes the universal values of co-operation, respect, tolerance, integrity and team-work; those values that transcend language and culture. Cllr Campbell gave the example of during her visit to the Palace in Armagh, Prince Charles witnessed a game of three halves, bringing together St. Patrick's College and the Royal School in a game of GAA and rugby. A couple of months later, this event was replicated at a peace IV event in Pollock Park, Lurgan, two codes, one community, bringing together Ulster Rugby and Armagh GAA in a game of three halves – this had a very profound effect on all of the young people lining up to see their heroes; the players all mixing together with good-natured banter and complete professionalism, wonderful ambassadors and role models for the younger generation.

In recognising the transformational power of sport, ABC Council have embarked on an ambitious plan for a new multi-sport state of the art leisure village in this city. This will bring together sports bodies, Council and community. It will have a mix of indoor and outdoor facilities for everyone, from the recreational user to the elite athlete. The Council recognises that sport can build a community and can build an economy. Like sport, creativity too has the capacity to unite.

Cllr Campbell noted that two weeks previously she had launched an exhibition in the Millennium Court Arts Theatre, a project called "This Place," which brought together communities from single-entity backgrounds to work on a variety of innovative artworks, which focused participants on recording stories of the past, but also encouraged them to look to the future; a wonderful example of connecting community, people and place through the medium of art. A similar project, run by TADA, also engaged participants in a series of workshops, lectures and educational trips to examine and learn about each other's culture. The programme facilitated real and meaningful engagement, and as a consequence, better community relationships.

Cllr Campbell stated that progress is being made, but there is still a body of work to do, and it is important the potential of sport and creativity is harnessed and built on to address existing obstacles to change. Work is needed within the community to create delivery models that will foster better relations, better understanding and respect for difference.

ABC Council developed a Community Development Action Plan, which combines both community development and good relations; historically, two functions that were delivered via two separate action plans. This new approach, adopted in 2019, allowed the Council to create a larger team, with designated officers for each district electoral area, which helps to achieve a more equitable service delivery. The action plan focuses on bringing together people of different identities around common issues, rather than those issues which divide us. The Council recognises the need to work more collaboratively to ensure good relations outcomes are achieved and wants to ensure methods of delivery create sustainable, evidence-based and measurable outcomes to improve the quality of life for all residents.

Cllr Campbell wished to leave attendees with one short quote, noting that recently a mentor, a colleague, a friend of hers passed away, Seamus Mallon. Seamus was a councillor, MP, MLA and Deputy First Minister. He was a Markethill, Armagh, Ulster, Irish and European man.

Seamus's last great work was his book, "A Shared Homeplace." In the last line, he says, "*As I prepare to take my leave of our shared homeplace, I take comfort in an old Greek proverb, 'A society grows great when old men plant trees in whose shade they know they will never sit.' We must keep planting those trees. We must create the shade.*"

Thanking attendees, Cllr Campbell hoped they would enjoy the day and the rest of the discussions and find them purposeful and engaging and suggested, on finishing, that attendees take an opportunity to enjoy Armagh despite the inclement weather.

Thanking Cllr Campbell for her welcoming remarks and for outlining the wonderful good relations work that is going on in ABC Council; **Dr Browne** noted that the last T:BUC Engagement Forum held in September in Belfast City Hall was a celebration of people making change for peace and an opportunity to hear about all the work that's ongoing across each headline action under the T:BUC Strategy

Dr Browne stated that through the Engagement Forums some of the fantastic work that is going on to promote and build good relations in the Uniting Communities Through Sport and Creativity Programme is being highlighted.

He noted Nelson Mandela said of his motivations in supporting the South African rugby team as they competed in the 1995 rugby world cup, hosted in a post-apartheid South Africa, he said, "*Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire and unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope, where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination,*" and although sport can often be about competition, Mandela showed that sport can also be about peace, about reconciliation, about bringing people together. He understood what sport meant to the South African people and used it in such a way that all communities felt that they belonged to South Africa equally. He used sport to build the nation, and that was the power of sport to Mandela, and hopefully that's the power of sport T:BUC can

harness and hope to harness through the programmes that we fund under the T:BUC strategy.

Dr Browne hoped the presentations during the day would provide a good insight into the range and the extent of those projects that are being delivered, and, as always, attendee's views are welcomed on progress to date. Are we heading in the right direction, or are there more or different things we should be doing? The engagement forum is very much a two-way process. It's about communicating messages to those who work in the sector and hearing from those who work in the sector about what is working well and what isn't working so well, and where we can improve.

Dr Browne highlighted the further information on the various programmes available at the 'market stalls' at the Forum and invited attendees to engage with the people at these stalls.

He stated he was particularly delighted that the Junior Ministers from the Executive Office were attending and invited Junior Minister, Declan Kearney, MLA, to say a few words.

Opening comments by The Executive Office Junior Ministers

Declan Kearney MLA

Mr Kearney recorded his delight in attending the Together Building a United Community event and thanked the Lord Mayor. He welcomed the large turnout, especially given the adverse weather conditions.

The Minister advised that the T:BUC initiative is the Executive's strategy to realise a fully united community, here in society. Noting the focus on sport and creativity, very powerful mediums for building lasting and genuine friendships and relationships across community divides, he stated that this was something he knew would be demonstrated with the day's presentations.

Given his own big interest in sport, across all of the sporting codes, he was particularly looking forward to hearing more about the Uniting Communities Through Sport and Creativity Programme - one of the seven headline actions which form the T:BUC strategy. Engaging young people in sports, physical and creative activities, undoubtedly helps to bring them and all sections of the community together.

"The future of our children and our young people is one of the key priority areas which we must identify and take forward, and we all have a common agenda, in so far as that we want to ensure that we have a community where young people can play a very full, vibrant and active role in building good relations among themselves."

He advised that this programme helps to create the next generation of community leaders. It aims to improve the attitudes of young people in relation to other religious, political, ethnic and marginalised communities in the north, and he stated that he was extremely impressed by the opportunities which this programme offers, from local sports coaching and training to giving young people the chance to learn

from the attitudes and the behaviours and experiences of world class athletes and some County Class athletes attending the Forum. He commented that a wide range of organisations, including Sport Changes Life, tackling awareness of mental health issues, the Irish Football Association, Cumann Lúthchleas Gael, Ulster Rugby and many others are working to support groups of marginalised young people to better engage with their community, by building their confidence, their self-esteem, their personal abilities and core-skills, and their efforts are making a real difference – he wished them well and much more continued success.

Sport should unite, not divide, and there have been exceptional models of good practice, exemplary examples, over the course of recent years, where different sporting organisations and codes have come together in a very innovative and collaborative and far-reaching way. So, while the theme today is sport and creativity, the Minister appreciated that there's a breadth of work being carried out across the good relations sector, and in particular within small grass-roots community settings. He took the opportunity to thank all for their diligence and hard work, their vision and their determination.

Concluding, the Minister stated that he looked forward to hearing about the work being done on the ground and more about the fantastic work going on across the T:BUC programme to promote and build a more united community, to all of our benefit and thanked attendees.

Thanking the Minister, **Dr Browne** invited Junior Minister, Gordon Lyons, MLA, to say a few words.

Gordon Lyons MLA:

Mr Lyons thanked The Lord Mayor and Junior Minister Kearney and noted his delight at attending the T:BUC Engagement Forum; stating he was looking forward to listening and, hopefully, learning from those who are undertaking brilliant community projects. The Minister stated he was impressed by the vast range of activities taking place right across Northern Ireland, across the T:BUC situation and stated that these contribute significantly to breaking down barriers and helping bring communities together.

The Minister advised that in 2019, DfC's Uniting Communities Programme engaged with over 500 young people from the ages of 11 to 16. Since the programme began, in 2015, well over 2000 young people have taken part in communities right across the country, from rural areas such as Erne East in County Fermanagh and Derg in Tyrone to more urban areas, such as the Lower Falls and Village areas of Belfast and the urban village areas of Colin, Eastside, Ardoyne and Ballysillan. This programme had funded life-changing projects, such as Street Soccer NI, where young people who are homeless are engaged through football activity and give them the opportunity to take part in the homeless world cup. Another funded programme, the Belfast Giants Ice Academy, works with care-experienced young people who have specific complex barriers to engagement on mainstream programmes; another great example of providing opportunities to those in need who deserve it most.

A number of the camps delivered by the Education Authority within the T:BUC camps programme also use sport as a way to bring diverse groups of young people

together. Often a range of sports are used to build foundational relationships, which are then used to break down barriers between young people. Many of the camps also engage young people in a wide range of physical activities or outdoor pursuits, offering opportunities to try things that they otherwise wouldn't, while making lifelong friends in the process.

In 2019/20, the Executive Office's Central Good Relations programme provided funding for sports projects which had over 10 000 participants and provided funding for 140 district Council programmes, many of which included sport and creativity to bring people together. The Minister commented that he looked forward to building on these numbers in 2021 and that he was encouraged by the results of these programmes. The results are there for all to see; 72% of young people taking part in United Communities programmes have reported improvements in attitudes towards persons of a different religion or minority ethnic background. While 83% have developed a friendship with young people from a different religious belief. For T:BUC camp, 75% of participants experienced positive attitudinal change, and for Executive Office programme, 60% experienced that change.

This is proof that the programmes are working, and it's vital that this good work, is built on going forward. This is but a flavour of the impacts that are being felt, and the day's presentations will provide a better insight into some of the different projects that are being delivered.

Concluding the Minister commented that he looked forward to learning more about the fantastic work that attendees were all engaged in, as DfC strives to build a more united community. Thanking those present for attending, the Minister put on record his appreciation for the work that attendees do, and to recognise what attendees have done for good relations, for the future of children, families, and indeed communities.

Dr Browne thanked both Junior Ministers for setting the scene for the discussions and advised that there were a range of presentations which would highlight different aspects of the work that's ongoing in sport and creativity in order to build good relations.

Presentations: T:BUC Headline Action: Uniting Communities through Sport and Creativity

Dr Browne invited Kathryn Hill, from the Department for the Communities, to outline the Uniting Communities Young Ambassadors programme.

Presentation 1: Uniting Communities Young Ambassadors:

Kathryn Hill

Ms Hill thanked Dr Browne and reiterated that it was nice to see the numbers attending, a sign of the real commitment the attendees had to good relations. Ms Hill explained that the Team at Active Communities were responsible for the delivery of the T:BUC, Uniting Communities Through Sport and Creativity programme.

Ms Hill advised that she wished to give a flavour of the programme and explained that the programme has three elements, two of which are delivered hand in hand.

- The Uniting Communities Through Leadership element engages young people aged 14 to 24, and they're recruited to become young leaders – taking part in structured, standardised training that's currently delivered by the Dame Kelly Holmes Trust, in partnership with PeacePlayers Northern Ireland.
- Running parallel to this, the Uniting Communities Through Community Activity element works with younger participants, aged 11 to 16.

The young leaders and the younger participants are recruited from specific geographical areas, all of which have good relations and interface issues. Young leaders are provided with the opportunity to co-facilitate the delivery of programmes to the younger participants.

A programme currently due to complete is in the Colin and Eastside urban village area; with further ongoing programmes in Ardoyne and Ballysillan plus in the Derg DEA in County Tyrone. It is planned to roll out through three further areas in 2021.

Additionally, the team delivers Uniting Communities by building capacity through a small grants programme which uses short term interventions to target those most marginalised by society. For example, using Street Soccer, which works with people who have experienced homelessness; also work with the Belfast Giants for young people who have experienced care and numerous other programmes to target those who don't normally involve in this type of programme.

The common denominator to all these elements is the use of sport and creativity as a hook to deliver, and more importantly embed good relations messages.

78% of young people think that religion will always make a difference to the way people feel about each other in Northern Ireland (Young Life in Time survey in 2014). Significantly, whenever the survey was retaken in 2018, the same 78% statistic stood. One of the youth workers in the delivery of the programmes was quoted as saying, *"I don't know one young person who is non-Catholic in my area. There's not one. I don't know how that can be improved."* Ms Hill noted that this sets out the massive challenge there is to all to support change and advised she would come back to that at the end of her presentation.

Who makes this happen? What makes the programme work? The Uniting Communities Young Ambassadors programme works with a wide and varied range of partners who all bring their own experience, their own ideas. Impact is maximised by focusing on the urban village areas, e.g. working with TEO colleagues to deliver their messages – also Ashton, TAMI, the Dame Kelly Holmes Trust and within our communities, helping to support a range of organisations that are already involved in delivering good relations messages. Without all the organisations the programme engages with, the programme wouldn't have the same impact.

Ms Hill introduced Johnny Davis from the Dame Kelly Holmes Trust and advised that Mr Davis would introduce some of the young ambassadors.

Johnny Davis stated that he was the Operations Manager for the Dame Kelly Holmes Trust in Northern Ireland and explained that the Trust operated a strategic partnership with the PeacePlayers Northern Ireland to deliver the Young Leaders and the Young Ambassadors programme. The Trust's vision is that every young person has confidence, resilience and self-esteem to succeed in life – with partners in PeacePlayers, we combine that with their focus which is on bridging divides, developing leaders and changing perceptions. Those two sets of qualities and ambitions are combined for young people evidence shows that that's something that is working very well for us.

The Trust has a unique model. Over time, the Trust has over 400 athletes who have lived what is described as a world-class lifestyle; so there's those who have performed at Olympic, Commonwealth, European, County level; also in a lot of the newer sports, urban sports. The Trust trains these athletes to utilise a set of attitudes and behaviours which are central to their world-class lifestyle and experience. They have to be disciplined, focused, show resilience, determination, deal with ... sport is a pretty brutal place ... highs and lows. For anyone who has been able to survive that and achieve, they have gone through a personal transformation. The Trust then train the athletes, who will work with the young people to help them develop the same set of skills and values. There is a lot of evidence (through the University of Sterling) to show that high performing athletes are also very high performing individuals when they're trained to work with young people.

Mr Davis suggested that the best way to the Trust's work is through the young people.

Video shown based on a young man called Jordan (based in East Belfast), who, through the programme, has spent a lot of his time working with and socialising with his friends in West Belfast.

Mr Davis advised Jordan is one of the young people the Trust is very pleased with and proud of, in what he has done - and his journey is ongoing, so hopefully, over time, attendees will hear more from him.

Mr Davis introduced Pearse Smith, again a young man who the Trust is very proud of and continues to show all the skills it is hoped he is learning on the programme. Pearse is going to present a bit of a walk through what his journey has been to date.

Thanking Mr Davis, **Pearse Smith** noted that Jordan has now moved over to Liverpool; putting it into practice his open outlook and how to approach different issues or the same issues that are happening globally – moving over with that same mindset

Mr Smith outlined his experience gained through the Uniting Communities – starting as a young leader at 16 (19 now) in the Young Leaders Colin and Eastside

programme with Jordan and other young people in his area and from East Belfast as well (he advised he is from the West side).

“When we were on the Young Leaders programme, it was kind of designed from ... we would get the training. At the start, we were very nervous; didn't know what to do. We had young people from different areas within east and west were being brought together. Like, when I say young, I mean younger than me, like 11-16, and they had come through some activity that we would be doing, whether it would be sport one week, whether it would be basketball or trampolining, and then, the next week, it would be dancing or painting, and then, whatever the activity might be. But then we would try and facilitate, alongside that, some sort of good relations aspect to the day; whether that be a topic like racism, sexism, anything like that, to try and promote better relations between the two communities.”

“At the start, we didn't really know what we were doing, but as we got the skills to not only facilitate them workshops but to draft our own sessions and be able to deliver them with the help of Dame Kelly Holmes Trust and Todd's Leap, as well as PeacePlayers, we just got more confidence, and we grew and learned and got the skills and ... yeah, got the skill set that we needed to try and make a difference ... and it really worked, because it was the fact that it was local ... was that when I was walking down the street, I got to see people who you would see every so often but you wouldn't talk to, and then you got these young people coming up and talking to me about how ... "Where are we going this week, and what are we doing this week, and what should I look out for?" And it's just amazing to see, and there would be people from a different background to me as well, so it's nice to know what our work did in the Young Leaders programme was genuinely making a difference to my local area.”

Mr Smith advised that when he was 18, he joined the Young Ambassadors programmes and noted that the difference is that the Young Ambassadors is a lot more in-depth. Young Leaders are very much about planning a session and delivering it to the young people, whereas this is planning a programme and taking that step above - "What can we actually do? What partnerships can we make with different sports or creative companies to try and make a difference to these young people?". Currently planning a social action project (which is hopefully going to be held in Queen's PEC), for 50 to 60 young people to try and challenge stereotypes, learn about their culture, their own culture, as well as equip them with the skills for conflict resolution; similar to the training we undertook as young leaders.

Mr Smith concluded that he had gained the confidence from the programme to be able to speak at the forum. Further, participants gradually get more and more responsibility as they go through the programme - something that participants would not normally get if they didn't do the programme – there is value in this. He noted through the different experiences and the partnerships made that participants have been able to travel internationally, e.g.

- Liverpool - through a connection through Dame Kelly Holmes,
- Berlin - to learn about the division in East and West Berlin,
- In August, the Young Ambassadors went to Rwanda.

Mr Smith introduced Nicole Breslin – who would speak more on the visit to Rwanda.

Nicole Breslin advised that she had been a member of the very first Young Ambassador group – a pilot that went very well. It was really successful and the programme is currently on their third uptake of Young Ambassadors. She suggested that there is so much room for development along that line.

“So, yes, I am a part-time sessional coach for Peace Players International, and I'm done that for five years, and how I got into the programme, seeing a Peace Players is one of the delivery partners on the programme, they approached me and thought that I was a great fit, so I joined, not really knowing what to expect, and it's safe to say that it has given me life-changing opportunities, which is some of the things I'm going to share with you today.”

“So, I attended the trainings, every two weeks, with a member of Peace Player staff, and a Dame Kelly Holmes athlete mentor, and from there, we were approached by Conal Heatley from the Commonwealth Games Council in Northern Ireland, and Conal's here today with us, and he's the only reason the three of us made it to give this presentation, so thank you, Conal. But he approached us with something called a Declaration on Human Rights in Sport. Now, he wanted me and my group to consult with him on the development of this Declaration and contribute towards the final product. So, this Declaration has 10 points, which are sort of guidelines for sporting bodies to abide by, in order to make sure that everybody is treated equally and that everybody's human rights are intact during ... whether it's trainings or huge sporting events. Not only that, but then Conal also gave us the opportunity, my own ambassador group and Pearse's ambassador group, who was the second group to come through, we all had the opportunity to travel to Rwanda to attend a Commonwealth Games Federation General Assembly, in 2019, and our job there was ... sorry, this was the first general assembly, where the Commonwealth Games countries all came together in Rwanda, but not only that; the Human Rights Commissions from each of those countries also attended.”

“So, the first day, we had ... the Commonwealth Games had their meetings ... but then we were in a meeting with the Human Rights Commissions from all around the world, and we were delivering a workshop on that, trying to pitch this Declaration to them. So, there is a lot of support for it, but it is safe to say that Northern Ireland is leading in this Human Rights in sport within the Commonwealth to date, so it's something for us to be very proud of.”

“Not only that ... so, yes, I've had the opportunity, Pearse had the opportunity to go to Rwanda. Another ambassador, Aaron Smith, was given the opportunity to go to the Sport and Change Forum, hosted by the United Nations, in Geneva, late last year. I was also given the opportunity to attend a sporting campaign launch in London, called Made by Sport. So, now I'm an ambassador for that campaign, and I was lucky enough to have conversations with the likes of Nicola Adams, Anthony Joshua. Prince Harry, himself, actually attended, and then also I had the opportunity to go to Amman in Jordan to attend their first ever peace talks, and I was able to give a speech there.”

“So, the opportunities have been endless. The skill set, like, I got from the programme was crucial for all of those opportunities I was given, in order to perform and do what I needed to do.”

Video shown outlining the Young Ambassador programme’s involvement in the Commonwealth Games Federation’s General Assembly held in Rwanda.

Kathryn Hill thanked Nicole Breslin and Pearse Smith; commenting that they are what Uniting Communities Young Ambassadors programme’s work is all about.

Ms Hill concluded that having listened to Nicole and Pearse speak about Rwanda; attendees saw first-hand the impact it had on them all in terms of experiencing the conflict that was there and what they learned from it and what they gave back. Does the programme make a difference? Ms Hill stated, that looking at these two, she would say yes. The statistics say 72% of participants in the programme have reported improved attitudes towards persons from a different religious belief, and 83% of participants, last year, developed friendships with persons from different religious beliefs.

“So, we are making a difference. We're continuing to invest. We're continuing to roll out, but there's much more work to be done, and that's what we're all here today.”

Ms Hill thanked that attendees for listening and reiterated her thanks to Nicole and Pearse.

Dr Browne thanked Miss Hill to a really fascinating presentation before inviting Diarmaid Marsden to speak about the work that's going on in the GAA.

Presentation 2: Gaelic Athletic Association

Thanking Dr Browne, **Diarmaid Marsden** advised that he represented the Gaelic Athletic Association, more specifically Ulster GAA whose headquarters were in Armagh City.

Mr Marsden advised he would provide a quick overview of the GAA before outlining one of the GAA’s key community outreach programmes being delivered and have delivered for the last 10 or 12 years.

Mr Marsden suggested one of the main strengths of the GAA is that it is a community-based volunteer organisation. The club is the centre of everything and, within Ulster, there are 375 clubs. As a provincial body, Ulster GAA tries to service and provide support to those clubs through the County units as well. It is an amateur organisation – it is one of the organisation’s strengths, in that none of our players, who would play maybe at Croke Park in front of 84 000 people, get a penny for their efforts, and any of the money that's generated is reinvested back down into the clubs at grassroots level.

In terms of Ulster GAA’s strategy ... inclusive, club and community focused, modern and innovative, driven by volunteers, and the organisation has to respect and support the volunteers and admire everything that they do, promoting that amateur

ethos. The organisation enables engagement in sport, culture, language and health through the well-organised club and County activities, facilitated by the good governance and fit for purpose units, and training, etc. is provided to help clubs in that regard.

Key figures:

- 375 clubs with 250, 000 GAA volunteers in Ulster, which is massive and the organisation is very proud of that – and of the reach into every corner of every County.
- Community health and wellbeing – seen as part of the organisation's remit – to provide support to members in areas of health and wellbeing, whether it's road safety, mental health awareness or providing support and life skills for young members heading up to the 'big smoke' in Belfast.
- Working within primary schools on the whole area of health and physical activity.

The GAA are an open and welcoming organisation – encouraging involvement from everyone, regardless of their gender, their community or religious background, their physical or mental ability, their race, their nationality, their age, their sexual preference, their social background. Mr Marsden highlighted his delight that the previous presentation referenced the Declaration of Sport and Human Rights which, over the last year or so, a number of sports organisations have signed up to, to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the sports forum that Ulster GAA sit on. Ulster GAA were very proud to sign up to this – it is a lot of the stuff that the GAA does and is proud to do.

Outreach work in terms of disabilities, and wheelchair hurling, has gone from strength to strength over the last number of years - recently winning an award through the National Lottery (presented by Paddy Kielty). The Ulster Provincial Wheelchair Hurling Team plays Munster, Connacht and Leinster on a regular basis. An Irish team went out to play floorball in Amsterdam last autumn. This is something that's been well received by GAA members who now see an outlet for their family members that may have a physical or a learning disability. The organisation provides opportunities – the strap line is "GAA for all."

Today is about outreach and Ulster GAA would see partnership as being key to help deliver on those outreach initiatives and outcomes that it holds dearly. Over the last number of years, there has been a fantastic partnership with the Ulster Rugby and the Irish Football Association, using sport to reach out across all communities. There are a number of different areas – through Ulster GAA's volunteering programme, through the Department for Communities, through the Peace 4 programme. Again the organisation sees the benefits of using sport to reach into communities and break down those barriers which are there.

An example is a game of three halves –

Were young people come together to try a sport which they've never had an opportunity to try in their school setting; whether that's football, Gaelic games or rugby. They get an opportunity to mix with children from a different community background, a different school, and play on a team that's mixed - boys and girls,

different religions, different ethnic backgrounds - using sport as the vehicle to deliver that.

Mr Marsden highlighted the Cuchulainn initiative, which has been ongoing for maybe 10 or 12 years. Essentially this programme brings secondary school children together that have never sampled Gaelic games or football or hurling, and they could be from the Catholic maintained side, they could be from controlled schools or integrated schools. Over the last 10 years or so, Ulster GAA has engaged with 20 different towns/areas, over 60 schools (i.e. some 20 controlled, 15 integrated and 30 or 35 maintained schools). Even from the maintained sector, the initiative tries to use children that don't play Gaelic games and match them up with children that have never sampled Gaelic games in their own area, and Ulster GAA puts a firm investment in this to coach, to explain the rules of the games and to break down those barriers and bringing young people together to play as one team.

For example, 10 years ago in Armagh city - St. Patrick's, St. Brigid's (no longer there), the High School and Armagh Royal all came together to play as a team. The Team were very lucky and got to travel to San Francisco to play in the intercontinental youth games. While not all the teams would have been as lucky; it was a tremendous occasion for those young people to come together and to see beyond the school uniform when walking down the street and associate with children that they probably wouldn't have had otherwise.

Four teams are selected from different areas every year. The programme this year is about to start. In 2018 Ballymoney were very lucky, in that they got an opportunity to travel over to London for the All British Championships to play as a Gaelic football team – this is offered to the girls as well.

In 2019 the teams were from Antrim and Crumlin, with a girls' team from Ballymoney - a fantastic trip again, doing the same thing; coming together through sport, through Gaelic games, breaking down those religious barriers and becoming friends, which is the most important thing. Trips included visits to Clarence House and the Irish Embassy. The programme content itself involves a bit of coaching, of preparation, a game at home, the trip to Croke Park, the trip to Britain, and then the good relations aspect to that where staff delve into the teams' thoughts and where they see things going in their future lives. Then a celebration event, which has been well received by the parents as well, and the feedback from all this has been exceptional.

Concluding his presentation, Mr Marsden explained that it is hoped to grow the Cuchulainn initiative from strength to strength. He noted that Ulster GAA is at a limited capacity in terms of what they can deliver coaching-wise; but certainly as an organisation they will look into how they can get into more areas, break down more barriers and showcase what's good about the GAA.

(During his presentation Mr Marsden invited attendees to collect a copy of the Ulster GAA's strategy document and view resources on the stand).

Video shown: "London calling for a history making group under an Ulster GAA initiative taking part in the massive all Britain youth championships played over four days and involving nearly 2,500 boys and girls. The Ulster teams came from schools

on both sides of the community. The boys found it tough going against quality opposition, but the girls didn't take long to get to grips with the game."

Mr Marsden thanked attendees for listening.

Thanking Mr Marsden, **Dr Browne** welcomed and invited **Michael Boyd** from the Irish Football Association to speak.

Presentation 3: Irish Football Association

Welcoming the opportunity to speak at the Forum; **Michael Boyd** advised that he would speak briefly about Football For All, the journey and the new Foundation before handing over to Kris Lindsay and finishing with a video of one of the participants in one of IFA's programmes.

Mr Boyd commented on starting as the Community Relations Officer at the Irish FA 20 years previously. He remembered coming into 6 Murray Street to the Community Relations Council (because it was funded under Peace 1 at that stage) and being the only person in the room that was using sport as a hook for good relations specifically – further looking round the room and everybody seemed really old. Now he is that old guy and he is looking at these young people and it's incredible to see. The Forum is full of people who are doing good work in the community using sport as a hook. Before Football For All, there was community workers like Gordy Walker (an attendee) doing good work in East Belfast and using sport, music and drama. Mr Boyd felt that today, when you see the sort of industry that's evolved around sport and good relations, it's tremendous and he wanted to start by saying well done to everybody in the room. In February 2000, there were only about 12 staff in the Irish FA; it was a very different organisation to what it is now. Today there are about 140 staff with a Foundation, a charitable arm which specifically delivers on good relations and community development.

Mr Boyd's job was to develop the first ever Football For All strategy and work with the Irish FA team, the partners at the Community Relations Council and especially the Programme's body to develop a plan. Mr Boyd offered his thanks to Mark Adair, Duncan Morrow and Jim Dennison because it took about ten years for the Irish FA to really get how this made brilliant business sense. During those ten years a lot of the support came from outside the organisation through the Community Relations Council (CRC). Mr Boyd felt it would only be appropriate to mention that at the start and offer his thanks to the CRC because without them there wouldn't be the progress seen today.

The next phase was developing a youth strategy for the Irish FA within which were embedded lots of community relations targets. The Irish FA's youth strategy is today held up by UEFA and FIFA as a model of best practice with regards to how sport can be used as a hook for health education, tackling issues around racism, sectarianism and employability. But participation has also doubled and double participation and getting numbers up only happens if the sport is inclusive. The 'Let Them Play' youth strategy has been a massive success so far - five years in and there's another five years to go.

Mr Boyd introduced the IFA's new Community Relations Officer, Chris Wright (at the IFA stand) and, noting that Chris Wright was quite new into his role, invited attendees – who could be networking with the Irish FA – to meet himself, Kris Lindsay and Chris Wright. They wanted to link in and do more work with all the good work that's going on today.

The Foundation is the Irish FA's charitable arm and the organisation is very proud of it.

- 55 full time staff.
- The Foundation invests with its partners about £2 million into community and participation programmes every year. UEFA recently selected the Foundation for a research piece on social return on investment. They selected ten countries out of the 55 countries that they support for this piece of research. Those findings are to be launched at the end of the month in partnership with different government departments and the Head of the Civil Service. The finding was that the Foundation is in the £100s of millions when you consider the investment of £2 million, the value to the community is in the £100s of millions – the organisation is very proud of that.
- The Foundation delivers Football For All programmes with regards to disability and girls - making sure that everybody in the community can benefit from football.
- Delivering 30 social projects – the impact of these projects to be reported on during the Forum. Mr Boyd stated he was delighted to see Disability Sport NI attending because they are a massive partner of the Foundation.
- The Foundation's disability programmes are often held up in the UK as one of the best with regards to how football can be used as a hook to create pathways for everybody. Mr Boyd believes the disability programme run by the IFA was the first government body to get the inclusive award from Disability Sport NI - very proud of that.
- Delivering lots of anti-sectarian and anti-racism training across the country (and it is a big part of Chris Wright's job to deliver that).
- Health programme – 'Ahead of the Game' which is a mental health specific programme around football. Over 40 free workshops delivered every year – partnering with TAMI (who is a big partner on the T:BUC programme); also working with Inspire, Train to be Smart and the UK Sports Chaplaincy. The programme ears that sectarianism is still a big issue in the community and the legacy of the Troubles is still impacting heavily on people's mental health right across the country and there needs to be more investment in that in the future.
- Delivering education and employability programmes - partnering with Ashfield, Laurel Hill and Belfast Model. Delivering BTECs; mental health programmes and leadership programmes to make sure that students can be part of the Foundation's plans moving forward.

Thanking the attendees, Mr Boyd introduced **Kris Lindsay** who would outline more about some of the current programmes.

Kris Lindsay also welcomed the opportunity to speak at the Forum; commenting on seeing so many organisations within the room from a variety of different backgrounds, all looking to come to the same end goal.

Mr Lindsay explained that he was going to touch on some of the headline 'Football For All' programmes of which there are a variety from disability, to schools, women, the elderly and mental health programmes. Commenting that Diarmaid Marsden had spoken earlier about working in partnerships; he noted that the first programme he was going to talk about was the 'Peace For Sport Uniting Communities' programme which is in partnership with the Ulster GAA and Ulster Rugby.

[video]

"The Irish FA, Ulster GAA and Ulster Rugby: three organisations that change lives through sport each and every day; three governing bodies that ignite a passion for play in young people, that inspire children to want to be the next county, provincial or international star, that deliver sport across our communities. Now through funding from EU Peace 4, these three sports are working together on a new ambitious programme, sport uniting communities is a collaboration project which will use sport to promote positive relations. The programme will celebrate cultural diversity. Working across the counties of Ulster it will bring people from differing backgrounds together. It will reach 17,000 people over the next four years through multisport events as well as shared workshops and programmes. It will reach across the religious divide and it will result in a change of perceptions and new relationships built through the unifying power of sport. Sport Uniting Communities, funded by SEUPB Peace 4 and delivered by the Irish FA, Ulster GAA and Ulster Rugby."

Commenting that he felt the video gave a good flavour of what the programme's all about; Mr Lindsay noted that the programme works with 45 clubs per year across the three sports. The idea is to build a community of clubs, so the clubs aren't working in isolation in competition with each other; the programme want clubs to work together. The programme upskills volunteers, shares best practice and run events at each other's clubs to build that community cohesion within that area. Noted that there have been some really good examples, e.g. in Banbridge the local rugby club, the local football club and the local Gaelic club were participating clubs in the first year of the programme. They now continue to run joint events quite regularly, probably once or twice a month with young people from each of the clubs going out to visit and play sport against one another and building those relationships.

There are 21 different strands within the peace programme – while not touching on them all in this very brief overview; some include a black minority ethnic strand of the programme where the local clubs are brought to that community giving the opportunity to participate in the three sports. The programme also links them within the local clubs and do a little bit of education programmes around that as well so that it's not just dipping the toe in and giving them the experience of playing; the programme is actually linking them to the club within the community so hopefully they can keep that going and integrate themselves into the community once the programme leaves.

Sport For Peace days – nothing that Diarmaid Marsden touched on the game of three halves. Mr Lindsay commented that the programme does a lot of work with school groups and community groups to give people opportunities to play sport that they may not have played before and to play against and with people from different

community backgrounds that they may not have had much engagement with in the past.

Stadium tours and the youth leadership programme where young volunteers from the participating clubs are put through a sports leaders UK qualification, giving them the skills and the tools to make a positive contribution to their communities. The third year of the programme has just started. In the first two years there were over 9,000 participants with sustained engagement - good numbers. It is hoped to continue with that over the next two years of the programme.

One of the other flagship programmes is the 'Stay Onside' programme which was developed in 2016 and at the time was a very unique and innovative programme and the first of its kind. This programme works in partnership with the Department of Justice, with the Probation Board and with the Northern Ireland Prison Service amongst others.

There are two elements: there's a community focus and a programme based within the Northern Ireland Prison Service establishments and its focus is on people who are at risk of offending or people who are already within the criminal justice system.

Programmes have been run in Maghaberry, Magilligan, Hydebank and Shannon clinic. Within these programmes the participants come from a diverse background - it doesn't matter the religion, their creed, their ethnicity, the programme targets in conjunction with Prison Service and Probation Board. Young people who are on the cusp of offending or the cusp of entering the prison system. The programme gives them the skills and the qualifications, give them opportunities to try and turn their life around, to ensure that they don't enter that system.

The programmes that run within the prisons are about upskilling those people so that when they are released that they don't reoffend, that they become positive people within their communities. The programme gives them employment opportunities within the IFA and within IFA's other strategic partners.

[video: *"That's probably one of the biggest benefits we have playing the game of football that it brings people from all backgrounds together and it's just trying to help through the IFA with getting people out and when they finish they sentence let them go into jobs and try and move on with their lives. So, it's just trying to get that across and here to show face and just show our support."*]

Noting that the video gave a brief flavour of one of the programmes in Maghaberry, Mr Lindsay advised that that within those programmes they have the physical benefits where people are out on the pitch doing some physical activity; but there are a number of educational strands to it as well. They do a mental health and wellbeing and resilience workshops which are very well received. Knowing the importance of mental health and wellbeing at these times and especially within that setting; it's vitally important that they're aware of the help and support that there is available for them as well.

Some of the outcomes from the programme:

- 115 participants just within the prison programmes.

- Out of those 115, 17 have reoffended and re-entered custody - that's a very small number especially with that population and those participants - a great outcome. The programme is working all the time to decrease that number and will continue to do that but a very good starting point so far.
- 52 participants have been referred onto other football programmes whether that be a Level One, IFA's participation programmes, IFA's volunteering team. So once they have re-entered society they then continue on with the programme in one of our other participation programmes.
- 18 of the participants have used the course to gain employment with 51 community and prison based Level One qualifications completed.
- Now have 15 Stay Onside ambassadors who came through the programme and speak to the other prisoners and other young people at risk about what the programme entails.

Mr Lindsay introduced Nathan, who is one of the Stay Onside ambassadors who came through the programme and was going to briefly tell his story.

Nathan stated that he was one of the ambassadors for the Stay Onside:

"My involvement with football was purely as a pastime as a youngster right up through into the mid-teens and late-teens. That's all it was for me, was to go out, have a game of football with the mates and see what happened after."

"Afterwards was what got me into a bit of trouble and I went into prison at the age of 20. I'm now 28. I'm only now finishing off the sentence that I started. And as you can imagine there's very few courses in there that can really drive a passion from somebody within that environment. But I went in it with a mind-set of I'm going to do whatever qualification, whatever course there is available, I'm going to make sure I'm in the best position available, when I'm released to back to work and start again."

"But after a number of years the courses all became kind of much like the last one. They were all kind of roll of the tongue business until the Stay Onside came in. The confidence gained just by spending a day playing football in that environment and coaching the football was second to none. And I would like to continue still doing this work after I'm finished and that is the long-term aim, but the short-term aim for now is highlight the people like yourselves that the work this course can do is potentially life changing and I'm testament to that. So I can only thank the IFA for the course that they have introduced and thank the rest of you for the courses you are providing to people like myself and other youngsters. And, that's me."

Thanking Nathan, **Mr Lindsay** advised that Nathan is one of a number of success stories that came through the programme and noted that it speaks for itself seeing people like Nathan today, the value and the benefit of the Stay Onside programme.

Mr Lindsay concluded that this had been a very brief run-through of two of the headline programmes within the Association and invited attendees to visit the IFA's stall throughout the day.

Noting that the Forum was running a bit behind time because of the later start, **Dr Browne** advised that there would one further presentation followed by coffee.

Dr Browne thanked the Junior Ministers for taking the time to attend, noting it was very much appreciated.

Dr Browne welcomed and invited **Gareth Harper** to give his presentation about PeacePlayers Northern Ireland.

Presentation 4: PeacePlayers NI

Welcoming the invitation to speak, **Gareth Harper** advised that he is the Managing Director with PeacePlayers International Northern Ireland. He noted that it was a real privilege to come and speak to attendees about the PeacePlayer's work and to further raise the profile of sport and its contribution to peacebuilding and reconciliation work.

Introduction – noting that it is PeacePlayers International Northern Ireland; highlighting the 'International, Mr Harper advised that their sister projects around the world. PeacePlayers use sport, and specifically the game of basketball, to unite young people from the historically divided parts of the community in Northern Ireland. PPNI's work here, as it is all around the world, is based on a very simple yet powerful premise that children who play together can learn to live together.

Vision: the vision is of inspired, confident children and young people building positive relationships and promoting sustainable peace in Northern Ireland.

Three core values which are shared globally across all the PeacePlayer sites.

1. See people as people rather than as a label or as a stereotype or some prejudice that may have been built up - try to see everyone's humanity including especially those who are from a different background or have a different opinion to our own.
2. Try to promote a culture of collaboration - nurturing and promoting this through trying to be helpful to each other. We recognise that we all have specific and unique talents and if we nurture and pull those talents and skills together then we can use these for the greater good.
3. Committed first and foremost to changing ourselves first. So we talk about inside transformation as being one of our core values so that we can inspire and influence others to make their contribution to peacebuilding.

The three core objectives, shared across all the PeacePlayer sites: bridging divides, developing leaders and changing perceptions.

1. In terms of bridging divides, through the programme we try to create opportunities for children and young people and youth that wouldn't otherwise have opportunities to do so or would have limited opportunities to do so to meet people from a different background to their own. Quite simply, if children who play together can learn to live together.
2. To develop leaders – teaching participants about conflict, the dynamics that create conflict and how to address conflict and the aim is through the programme that not only do participants emerge as people that are available to deliver our programmes but who are champions for peace and who can

participate and play an active role in promoting peace in their own lives and in their spheres of influence outside of that.

3. The change of perceptions. Through the leadership shown by people like AJ and Rachel and their example, PPNI try to show what's constantly possible. Speakers have talked about great examples of how Sport can be used to build and promote positive relations. Essentially, that's what PPNI's work is about - what is possible, what can be achieved and how experience can be leveraged. The examples of good practice that exist out there to encourage others to do it and then actually bring about society-wide an institutional change.

International – PPNI work in Northern Ireland and also work in South Africa, the Middle East and in Cyprus. The Headquarters are in Washington DC and recently programmes have been established in some of those big cities in US, e.g. in Brooklyn, Baltimore, Los Angeles, Detroit and in Memphis. Same ethos, same plan - how do you use sport to build relations where relationships have broken down and where they traditionally haven't worked. Again, it's about constantly trying to show what's possible, what can you achieve, what, what can be done.

There are six main areas of programming – in brief - essentially at 'PeacePlayers' we try to create a progression route and leadership pipeline. So, the very first and earliest intervention is through a Primary School Twining programme. So, at the top there are kids from St Aloysius and Ballymacash Primary Schools in Lisburn who have come together, traditional Twining last for six weeks. It happens during the school days, kids come together - they put on some mixed and integrated teams, they play Basketball, they do team building activities and they are also facilitated at a Community Relation conversation. This year, with support from Executive Office, that programme has also evolved and developed and grown to include a Teacher Training component. So, PPNI can continue to do that type of work, but actually, what's really important is beginning to leave that capacity within the schools and the schools themselves can continue to do that work into the future.

Secondly, there is a Cross-community League that happens after schools in the evenings, the residential programme, and there is some accredited training attached to that as well. We try to develop 'Hubs' in areas where we create integrated teams. So, in Belfast there's North, South and, North, South and West Belfast integrated 'Hubs' there where integrated teams play together and are engaged in a Community Relations and peace-building curriculum as well.

'Champions for Peace' - people who graduate through the Primary School Twining programme and graduate through the Cross-community League are invited back to become 'Champions for Peace' and essentially this programme helps them to get accredited qualifications to become Coaches and Facilitators themselves, but also provides them experiential learning opportunities. They join as a Primary School participant, they get involved in the Cross-community League, they become a 'Champion for Peace' and then they are re-employed as Coaches and Facilitators back in the programme again. Already mentioned, Nicole and Pearse are both Coaches with Facilitators now, with 'PeacePlayers'. AJ and Rachel are also on the 'Ambassadors' programme as well, but they've come through that progression.

Coaches Development programme – AJ and Rachel have come through that, twenty-six of the participants from last year that were particularly interested in becoming Coaches are given the opportunity to come back and live-test their skills. So, they come under the wing of a Sessional Coach to learn how to deliver sessions themselves and facilitate Community Relations conversations on how to use Sport to deliver peace-building outcomes.

Also involved with the ‘Game of Three Halves’ which were mentioned earlier (the ‘Two Codes’) and a programme is operated annually called ‘The Belfast Interface Games’. That’s funded, with support through the T:BUC’s Camp’s programme in Belfast. This year it is hoped to roll it out again and this year the ‘Belfast Interface Games’ might include a team from Larne. Essentially, it introduces people to the three sports - to play Gaelic Football, Rugby and Soccer and also Basketball - for a good mix in that. Initially when kids come together, they play Basketball together as a neutral sport and then the programme introduces the three codes and the three sports which maybe some of them will have or will have played in the past. The important bit in that is, the fourth half, so you have got a ‘Game of Three Halves’ which doesn’t make a lot of sense, a ‘Game of Four Halves’ makes even less sense, four quarters don’t. But the fourth half essentially is, leverage in the relationships that develop on the sports field, on the, on the Gaelic pitch or on the Soccer field or on the Basketball court to facilitate a conversation and capacity building around Community Relations work and essentially, how sport can be used to build positive relations.

One of the cool things about being ‘PeacePlayers’ International, are the opportunities that opens up for International games. Mr Harper noting that attendees had already heard about Pearse and Nicole who went to Rwanda; advised that a 2020 group would be going to the Middle East to be part of the ‘Global Friendship Games’. A new huge event which ‘PeacePlayers’ globally has put together and essentially, the twenty young people from Northern Ireland will travel to the Middle East to be joined by colleagues from all the ‘PeacePlayer’ sites around the World and basically they’ll come together to share their experience of being involved in the programme in each of the areas and also to think about; “Well what is it that unites us, rather than separates us?” And “How can we further develop this movement around peace-building through sport work?”

Noting that CRC very kindly core fund ‘PeacePlayers’; Mr Harper commented PeacePlayers are very grateful for that. Having that acknowledgement was really important in terms of just having sport arriving at the table. Mr Harper noted that Michael Boyd had talked about the importance of having sport recognised as the first contribution to peace-building - so, having CRC get on board was really important to ‘PeacePlayers’. ‘PeacePlayers’ have invested quite heavily in developing and monitoring the evaluation process - trying to constantly track the impact, but also to think about how the programme can be improved.

- Last year - worked with around 2350 children and young people – that is significant.
- Team of 9 core staff and about 35 Sessional Coaches.
- Touched on and impacted upon 2350 young people last year - including work with 34 Primary Schools.
- Facilitated 17 Cross-community Twinning’s across Belfast, in Mid-Ulster, Mid and East Antrim and Ards and North Down.

- Total of 463 individual interventions last year facilitated and the model is based upon regular and sustained contact. So, this isn't one-off, one-hit interventions, this is around creating a long-term, sustained and prolonged intervention.

Noting the use of language around statistics would be recognisable from CRC and TEO and T:BUC Camps linking back to the strategy; Mr Harper also highlighted as particularly important (leading into AJ and Rachel's presentation):

- Last year - a bank of 35 Sessional Coaches - very proud to say that 23 of those Coaches, 66% of them are former participants and graduates of the programme.

Concluding outlining the leadership pipeline and the progression route; Mr Harper noted that AJ and Rachel had been involved in Primary School and have come all the way through and are engaged working back in the areas that they come from using the skills and experiences that they have picked up using sport as a really effective tool to do this type of work engaged back there. That leadership back bench is really, really important.

Mr Harper invited **AJ and Rachel** to speak.

AJ - "So, hiya, I'm AJ, this is Rachel. You'll never really find us in a conversation without each other or you won't hear AJ without hearing Rachel. You won't see AJ without seeing Rachel. We are practically inseparable, and it's been that way really from we started 'PeacePlayers'."

So, 11 years ago this school year, 'PeacePlayers' came into my Primary School, which was Wheatfield. I am not sure how much, many of you have actually heard of Wheatfield. It's in North Belfast and 'PeacePlayers' also went into Holy Cross Girls which was Rachel's Primary School, which is also in North Belfast. The thing about our schools was if this was my school, this was Rachel's school, but I had never ever met anyone from Holy Cross, so while we'd see each other, we'd notice each other walking to and from school, that was it, that was as much as we interacted.

So, when 'PeacePlayers' came in it was kind of like, "Oh, no, how is this going to go?" "Who are these people?" "Are they the same as me?" "Are they different as me?" "Is the stories all true?" So, 'PeacePlayers' played a really vital role in me growing up in every single stereotype, part, any discrimination I've ever had in my life to quickly wipe it out of me and be like, "No, people are people, this is how you should see everybody."

"So, from age 9 we went through the 'Twining' programme and then the 'Super Sports Day' was actually called, 'Game of Three Halves' then. It was the first ever 'Game of Three Halves' and that was kind of when Rachel and I seen each other for the last time. We didn't know it would be the last time until Rachel and I joined Bill at 13 and we played in Team North Belfast. So, there was South, East and West Belfast. There was rivalries, it was friendly rivalries it was probably one of the fun-est years of my life playing in that League, but we didn't actually realise the AJ and Rachel's story until we were like: "I went to Wheatfield." She is like, "I went to Holy Cross." We went back and we actually found that photo and the Coach in that photo is the woman that brought us through the programme and we actually now Coach alongside her in that very

Twining now. So, the kids that sit in front of us are basically ‘little us’s’ and we’re ‘little big ones’. Rachel”

Rachel – “So, later on we moved up through the ‘Champions for Peace’ programme. We actually, see the last picture, we actually ran a fund-raiser together and went into the two Primary Schools, we were 17 at the time.” AJ and Rachel noted that this was on the news in Canada.

Rachel – “So, we worked through that and we, and we also worked through a ‘Coaches Development’ programme at 16 and right now we are back into the Primary School, as I just said, Holy Cross a wee field across the shoe from each other. We’ve been in that Primary School Coaching now for almost two years. It’s pretty cool and full circle.”

[Video showcasing some of the work of PeacePlayers]

Thanking the attendees for listening, **Mr Harper** hoped they had enjoyed the video and noted that Rachel and AJ would be around for a while. Mr Harper concluded that at ‘PeacePlayers’ “we talk about being in the business of doing ourselves out of business, you guys are going to take our jobs very soon in the future. Sports Clubs are going to take it on, various organisations are going to try and do this work. So, just thank you for the opportunity and continue to believe in the power of sport for this work.”

Dr Browne thanked Gareth Harper, AJ and Rachel, noting the really inspiring story to go with the other stories heard during the morning.

Advising the attendees coffee was available, Dr Browne noted that while the Forum was running a little bit late, it would finish on time at half one with lunch. Attendees were asked to return to their table for twenty-five past twelve for Discussion Groups and feedback.

Discussion Groups with key questions

1. What are the unique issues that impact upon the delivery of good relations using sports?
2. What additional help and support is required to improve good relations outcomes using sports as a medium?
3. What actions can be taken now to improve good relations in sports? Who should be involved and how?

Plenary Session

Dr Browne welcomed attendees to the Plenary Session, stating that he hoped they had had an opportunity to have a good discussion around the three questions. Outlining the process, Dr Browne invited points from the nine groups present.

Bill Shaw 174 Trust to Duncairn. *On question one, there were quite a number of issues, not least lack of funding and that was funding in a general sense to run the Sports Club whatever the particular sport happens to be but I suppose in this context more specifically, funding around good relations work or anti-sectarian, anti-sectarianism or anti-racism whenever that money is not available, budgets that are already under pressure can, they can suffer.*

The quite obvious one, but it needs to be stated, the location of the sports venue, the, the pitch or the hall given that most spaces in most communities are contested, so the, the challenge of establishing and maintaining a shared space in that technical sense.

Unknown - *one of the things is that sports is actually limiting, not everybody when they see sports, they kind of, if they're not sporty they are not attracted to it. So, it's about how you engage other people because it's not just about sports, it's about the bigger picture. That, along with the Primary School that sometimes good relations, we're introducing something to a young age that they're not actually aware of. So, you're asking the good relations element of it isn't always appropriate to, to the ages that you are working with and those younger ages. So, the question there is, that they are involved with the funding isn't always the best way to capture so it's not always 'user friendly' so maybe looking at different ways of capturing good relations outcomes.*

Unknown - *some of the issues that were raised at our table were if an organisation loses their partner that could have a detrimental impact on the delivery of the Good Relations Sporting programme and it then becomes like a capacity issue. Also, over-subscriptions, many of the programmes are chasing the same pool of participants and one more issue is around partnerships, if some smaller sporting organisations are doing very niche things and don't really want to expand into the area of good relations and some are just reluctant to open doors to this type of work.*

Dr Browne suggested reflecting on the points.

Dr Browne responded on the first issue around funding for good relations - I suppose I should be making the comment on that really as the lead Department. Funding, in terms of funding I will, I will make a brief comment on it. The funding we have for good relations largely comes from the, the, the Political Agreement. So, we had 12 million pounds a year for 5 years, that comes to an end this year. So, we've, we've been in, in this Sector, we have been in a lucky position of having guaranteed funding at a time when others didn't. It may not have felt that we are in a great position, but actually having that guarantee of 12 million pounds a year has been really, really important. Now, that comes to an end this year and we are talking with Ministers about how we ensure that that funding is available going forward and you will have seen in the 'New Decade – New Approach' document the, the repeated

references to the importance of tackling sectarianism, tackling paramilitarism, building good relations, it's right through the document, it's core to the document, so I fully expect that the resources that we need to at least maintain that, will be there. Whether we can get any more I think will be tricky in the current financial environment to be honest around that.

Dr Browne noted the issue about the location of the venue and how you can, when you have contested spaces and maybe the, the area where you want to conduct the activity happens to be in one particular area, how do you make those areas shared spaces?

Dr Browne invited panel members to comment.

Diarmaid Marsden - I suppose it is an issue and that's reference partnerships and presentation and if local clubs can come together and with their local Authority and if there's neutral spaces that people feel comfortable coming together to play sport or whatever, I know the comment has been made, "Not everyone is into sport". So, whether if it is an indoor venue or an outdoor venue local Authorities have facilities available, plus the facility hire for that and if we can come round those sort of discussions and how they can be made accessible to groups that are genuinely looking to promote good relations through sport then they should be made available.

Michael Boyd - It's to echo the cost factor often dictates where these things happen and across Northern Ireland, the hire of facilities for pitches or rooms for workshops has went up in recent years and there doesn't seem to be a joined up approach around actually how we make that more accessible to grass roots community groups who want to use sport or dance or music or whatever it is for hooks. So I think a more joined up approach to how we make those facilities that are there and that are excellent, more accessible to grass roots community groups would be useful.

Gareth Harper – my only comment is about the journey of it and helping people to see that they are open and inclusive spaces. The AJ and Rachel story that you heard earlier, when that programme started we sent 2 buses to North Belfast to Schools on either side of the road of each other and took them to the neutral space of Queens PEC which is perceived to be a neutral safe space so they could play their Basketball together. Those kids are now in each other's schools playing those programmes. AJ and Rachel are coaching in those programmes. So, it's about changing mindsets and then supporting those venues basically to open themselves up and say, "Look we are open, we are inclusive and we want people from, from all walks and all traditions to be able to come and use and make the most of this facility and see it as a shared space." But that takes time, it is a journey and it just doesn't happen overnight. The first intervention for us in North Belfast was 2002, the first 'Game of Three Halves' we ran in Ballysillan Leisure Centre then right on their doorstep was in 2010, it was an 8 year journey to get folks along to that space where they actually will attain to a shared space close in locality.

Dr Browne invited **Kathryn Hill** to comment on another point because it is linked to the 'Uniting Communities through Sport'. The whole issue is not just about sport, how do you get activities in fact of, to people who have from all backgrounds, with all abilities and all interests?

Kathryn Hill - the programme focuses on Creativity as well, but I would say that sport does tend to take the lead and it is about finding that balance because the young people that are interested in sport are often not as interested in Creativity or Drama and it's about making sure there's something open to everyone. And I would say as well, when we talk about sport, we're not talking about necessarily competitive sport, it's about sport for fun, so there are elements of sport that most people can enjoy if we make it more about fun, more about the games and more about what you learn from it.

Dr Browne invited a further point.

***Unknown** - This issue, not everybody wants to do good relations. How do you encourage people to get involved in this kind of an activity? What's the hook or what are the different ways in which you can encourage groups to participate who maybe are a bit unsure?*

Kathryn Hill - Maybe we need to re-badge it. We were saying at our table, good relations to us is not necessarily what young people perceive as good relations. They have increased focus not just on the orange and green, but about mental health, climate change, there's a whole load of other factors which they see as how they link and relate together. So, maybe it's just about how we badge it. I don't think you can force or impose things on people it has to be about choice, but I totally agree if it can be rebranded and it's about people coming together and if sport is one way of getting involved in activities where we have to talk and get to know one another then, then so be it.

Gareth Harper - that focus on the relationship development I think is really, really important in that. Good relationships could be between neighbours, it could be friends, between siblings, they are totally different. It's the focus on the relationships and how do you create the space and environment within which people can develop meaningful relationships that are based on mutual respect and an understanding. The vehicle of sport is fantastic – like for AJ and Rachel (who have left now); but, they are not going to be NBA players. They very much see sport and Basketball, the sport that they are interested in, as being a tool to facilitate relationship development. That's what they're involved in this programme about; yes, they have an interest in sport, but their primary role and focus is that they have decided they want to give something back, they want to make a difference, they want to make a contribution because they have had this positive experience. But facilitating that relationship development, I think, really should be the focus of this – be that anywhere. 'PeacePlayers' works across the World, so it's not just green and orange for us. It's in South Africa it's a race issue. In the States it's a race issue, in the Middle East it's Palestinians and, and the Israeli community there. So, this stuff translates and works across the World, but it is focus, it is people and seeing people as people and the focus on developing relationships.

Michael Boyd - For me, sectarianism is still a massive issue and good relations and defining what it is, is really important. I think a lot of people use the term without actually understanding what it's about and tackling the issue of sectarianism and having mediation skills and having conflict resolution skills is really important and I

think it's important that we define it. It's important that we give the groups that are engaging the young people we give them the skills and up-skill them so that they can deliver meaningful change and bring people on journeys because that's what good relations is about, it is about changing, helping people change themselves and having those skills, those facilities and skills, those listening skills is a unique skill and should be valued and I think the more we talk about sport and good relations we should define 'good relations' exactly what it is and harness the power of sport for it.

For us, one, one of the things we prioritized is working in Protestant working class areas and targeting schools because the research was saying that those kids were suffering with regards to their educational attainment and we are finding for those kids in the likes of Ashfield and Boys Model and Laurelhill and places like that good relations getting accredited - OCN accredited or BTEC accredited courses, getting them to a point where they can come and work for us on a casual basis as Coaches at our camps and using good relations in sport is, is the vehicle for that. It is really meaningful to them to where they are at in their lives, but it's about whatever group you are working with, it's about meeting them at their level and facilitating and listening to what good relations means.

Dr Browne invited further points.

Unknown - Margaret was also talking about needing a more consistent approach to good relations because there's so many definitions and perceptions of what it actually is, but in addition to that we also looked at transport and facilities, particularly in rural areas. Not all young people have access to the facilities that they would have in Urban areas and there's also the issue of the need to map services. There's so many activities going on, should it be Schools, Community Groups, Housing Associations, Sports Clubs, and sometimes they don't know what each other's doing and everybody is working in silos and if there was some way of mapping these activities so that people could work together and link in and build relationships and all work together.

Unknown - our group talked about numerous things, but one of the things we touched on was the lack of capacity amongst some grass roots organisations in terms of accessing funding and that there should be some form of up-skilling happening with, with local, for instance, girls and boys clubs were talked about at our table.

The other key thing that we were also mentioning was the, the sort of lack of awareness of what else is going on out there. So, a lot of people work on their own silos if you like and there's a lot of good work going on there, so one suggestion was to have some sort of Northern Ireland wide directory of what's going on in terms of sports and good relations work.

Unknown - One of the things that we looked at was looking at the understanding of good relations and how at the start of most programmes what we try to do is pigeon-hole people and I think that that's probably not the right way to go about it. The other thing we looked at was, that some schools really do shy away from the whole notion of good relations, so "It's not a problem in our school." They just touch it. Sort of the last thing then was again, more emphasis put on the whole creativity side of things as well where you do have music, you have art, you have drama and for young

people who are interested in those type of things and not just sport all the time, but we do believe that sport has a massive role to play in building relationships and bringing people together.

Thanking attendees for their points, **Dr Browne** invited Diarmaid Marsden to comment: transport in rural areas, how you deal with where it's difficult bringing people together and how maybe groups can collaborate that.

Diarmaid Marsden - it is relevant to the very first question on what, what issues impact on the delivery of good relations. I suppose some Sports Clubs are very lucky that they may have their own transport. Some can tap into the local rural community transport. I have seen some of those in operation, but if it's something like ourselves that are delivering this and some of our previous examples with schools, we have had to provide transport so we have had to tap into funding to actually provide that transport. So, yes, there is going to be a barrier around that, but we'll do what we can to try and overcome that and sometimes that means dipping into our, our own resources to make sure the, the event happens, but if there's funding available to cover those barriers like transport then that should be made available as well.

Dr Browne invited Michael Boyd to comment on: "The lack of capacity at grass roots level in Clubs?"

Michael Boyd - it's something that is a big focus for us as a Foundation about how we build up that capacity. We have quality marks for development clubs or inclusive clubs and the inclusive clubs like the highest accreditation you can get and that's about building up the capacity of the club to meet the needs of the community with regards to girls, people with disability, community projects, mental health programmes, whatever the need is in that area and it sort of comes back to that last point for us as a foundation we were going to have 12 'Hubs' across the country; two in Belfast and one in each of the other Council areas and meeting the demands and the needs of the grass roots community groups and clubs will differ from area to area.

I think that part of the evolution of what we are doing with regards to sports and good relations is actually finding out from the people in those communities and the young people in particular for us - what are their needs, what are their wants? And then us adapting and providing that. At grass roots clubs, one of the initiatives we put in place recently was a partnership of Community Foundation Northern Ireland, where we put in a lump sum of money, they put in some money alongside it and grass roots clubs can apply for small grants to help them become more inclusive to set up a girls section, a disability section, to have a mental health programme, whatever the need is in their area, but it's, we have 1000 clubs and we're currently working somewhere in the region of about 250 of them so there's a massive need there not being met and we have to up our game to make sure we're providing a better service.

Dr Browne invited Gareth Harper to comment on: "Some schools shy away." I was thinking about that and I was thinking about AJ and Rachel from Wheatfield and Holy Cross where there was so much difficulty in the classroom. Do you want to say little

bit about how you can encourage schools to realise that this is an issue they should be getting engaged in and help them to understand how they can get engaged.

Gareth Harper - The Holy Cross, Wheatfield, is a fantastic example. So, you saw what was happening in 2001 up there. 'PeacePlayers' arrived in 2002 and said, "Look, we'd love to try and do something here with our unique sport called Basketball." And some of the parents and some of the schools said, "Absolutely not!" and went, went to actually threatening Court action against the schools and saying, "No, I don't want my kids to engage with that programme." But what, what was really important, was some of the other parents and the schools themselves said, "No, this is really important, and we do want to be involved." So, there's a bravery there amongst the schools themselves for the other parents actually to step up and say, "I want something better for my young people." And the journey of some of the parents up there have been from, "Absolutely not!" to "Okay, I don't want to have a relationship with the other tradition, but actually I don't want to prevent my kids from having a relationship" to the point now where the parents are saying, "Well, if my kid can do it, why can't I?" So, they become a 'Champion for Peace' in that, in terms of being an impact, of having a positive impact in their space. We still get some schools in some spaces saying, "We're not ready yet" or "Somebody in our governing body said not yet", thankfully that's less and less of an issue, but that again, it doesn't happen overnight. You have a context and peace rule says here which supports and encourages schools to get engaged and to be involved with schools have a requirement to deliver in a personal development and mutually understanding the curriculum. They don't always have the skills to be able to do that. So, part of our job, as I mentioned, is to go in now and try and train the Teachers up to help them to be able to do that.

Michael mentioned the OCN Courses, so 'PeacePlayers' have developed a suite of OCN Courses which look at how to promote diversity through sport and how to create positive relations through sport. For our part it's about helping to build that capacity. We don't want to be in those schools for ever doing this. We want to be able to say, "Okay, the capacity is with the school now, you guys knock yourselves out, go for it. You don't need us to be there, we'll move on to the next place and space." But it's still a constant challenge, but I am happy to say that the majority of the schools that we work with now, we don't get the push-back, they actually want to engage. They want to be involved, but they do need that support to be able to do it.

Michael Boyd - one thing I wanted to add before we move on - we did a survey of our grass roots clubs where we asked them what they want from us and one of the main things that came back was help with mental health and suicide prevention. And that kind of shocked us cause we were thinking - okay they want - Youth Coach Education Bursaries are the usual things that we would have expected. But mental health came back as one of the top things that the clubs need help with at grass roots level and I think, when you look at sport and what we can do for mental health, it's very important that we don't jump in with two feet and try and take the space of maybe 'Tell Me' or 'Train to be Smart' or 'Inspire' because there are brilliant groups out there - they deliver.

And what, what we did in football was we spent 12 months building those partnerships. Training our own staff up, actually made a full-time partnership with 'Tell Me' where every workshop we deliver they're with us on the ground and I think

it's about collaboration. And the big thing about today that I'll take away is, there's far more partnership opportunities and collaboration opportunities than I even thought existed and I have been working in this sector for 20 years. So, we need to harness that and on the back of today get the likes of Sports Council Northern Ireland to have a Sports and Good Relations Forum, having networks so that in each Council area we know who the service providers are, who the delivery partners are so that sport doesn't try and step into the areas that it shouldn't step into. Cause, we add value and support, we don't try and take over, so it's that type of approach which would be important.

Thanking Mr Boyd, **Dr Browne** invited Kathryn Hill to comment on "How do we make sure it doesn't get pushed out of the way? That the Arts and Creativity aspect doesn't get pushed to the side by sport and is there more that we can do? Or, "What are the issues around that?"

Kathryn Hill - that's coming through, we would do good work with 'Fab Lab' and the 'Artsekta', there are groups out there that are delivering this type of work and it's about making sure that we have partnerships with them.

Dr Browne invited further points.

***Unknown** - One of the key issues that our group identified, the duration of funding. So, for example, typical pots of funding is going to be divvied out for a one year period. After that you're trying to integrate these young people into different programmes or different sort of projects in order to facilitate them. I think maybe pots of funding should be given out for a 3 year basis where you can then, there's a sustainability element to your project, rather than the uncertainty come the end of the financial year when you're trying to generate some additional finances in order to keep a project going or there's a two month waiting list in order to recruit and retain young people, it's very difficult.*

***Unknown** - the one that we mentioned was the preconceptions of the sports and the preconceptions of the participants' parents communities that we're trying to work in. And, either it's one sided based on identity or even gender and stuff like that.*

***Unknown** - a few of the final points around the importance in the role for 'Champions' and 'Advocates' for this work. It's about finding them in your local club structure and using them to articulate the 'Good Relations' message on your behalf, but it's also about investing in growing those kind of 'Champions' and 'Advocates' as well and using them then to showcase the best practice.*

Dr Browne invited Kathryn Hill to comment on funding.

Kathryn Hill - there is no doubt and you'll get no disagreement from Government that this continued period of one-year budgets hasn't worked for anyone. It hasn't worked for us either. We are hopefully moving towards multi-year budgets. So, hopefully that will be able to give assurance to people, but we've been constrained by our political circumstances and our hands have been tied.

Dr Browne invited Diarmaid Marsden and Michael Boyd to comment on Preconceptions of Sport, preconceptions of [participants' parents communities] – suggesting this must be something Mr Marsden had come up against.

Diarmaid Marsden - It is and I suppose speaking from a GAA background we would be perceived as predominantly Catholic and Nationalist and from possibly the Protestant and Unionist community could be a 'no go' area. It's something we've worked hard to try and, try and address.

I couldn't tell you how many Protestants play Gaelic games because we don't ask. We don't care what people's background is. And clubs at grass roots level don't, they just want to keep their club going. They want to field teams and try and be as good as they can possibly be on and off the field. We have had examples where some schools wouldn't engage and possibly, sorry I'll correct that, the school was ready to engage in one of our programmes, but the parent of one of the children wasn't and it caused too much hassle for the school to get involved.

But now, thankfully there's been good news and a couple of years down the line that same school has now embraced one of our programmes and is ready to get involved because of the experience of other local schools in the projects we are working. So, we can't force, as I said earlier, or impose Gaelic games on anyone. We just want to show how good it is and how good it is as a sport first and foremost. If people can experience that and, as I said, make new friends in the process, then all the better.

Michael Boyd - the most recent research I can think of that touched on this was, Professor Owen Largey from Ulster University did a big piece around Social Exclusion in sport and learnings for Football were really interesting and for Association Football was, that was in 2014 that was carried out and it was quite a large piece of research and it basically said, "For Football in Northern Ireland, trust in the Catholic communities went up, but trust in the Protestant communities went slightly down." And that was an interesting learning for us with regards to our programmes and our 'Football for All' campaign and I think for us it frustrates us sometimes that maybe the stereotype or the perception is that Football is one side of the community, when actually the reality and part of this 'Social Return on Investment' piece that UEFA have done with this, is that we have a 1000 clubs, we have over 30,000 registered adult players, we have over 50 venues with 14,500 kids play on a regular basis in our small side games.

Our reach, Football is totally universal even if you look at the, the International teams that played at World Cups, or European Championships, the teams are pretty much 50/50 if you want to break them down into Catholic and Protestant and I think that's one of our biggest strengths, as a sport is that we are a universal sport that can reach into all parts of the community. And it frustrates me sometimes when we spend, we maybe say that "This sport has no baggage", "Another sport has no baggage", or "This sport has lots of baggage." And I think sport is sport and we need to actually work with the sports, whatever sport it is, where it's at and how it can contribute and I think for, for ourselves in Football, we're in a really healthy space when it comes to actually well we are engaging in the communities. Our problem is, the perception piece and how we sell and promote the work that we are doing. We, we need that to sort catch up with the delivery on the ground.

Dr Browne invited Gareth Harper to reflect on any he wished - but 'Champions' and 'Advocates' for this sort of work?

Gareth Harper - to pick up on Michael's point there just towards the end is, sport is a fantastic vehicle and any sport is amazing for this and 'PeacePlayers' chose Basketball cause it's perceived to be a neutral sport here. But we completely recognise, because it's such a small sport here, that we can impact isn't going to be as big as these guys in that space. So, our job is to take our experience, both with Basketball, but Internationally and then share that with these guys here that have that reach and can have that impact and lead into those clubs and into those spaces so that, to trickle this stuff out. Sport is a fantastic vehicle. There are the challenges in each of the organisations as to around perceptions, but absolutely those people that are involved with sport are primarily interested in the people that are playing the sport and increasingly who is not playing my sport and how do I encourage them to start playing my sport in the future and very much we see that as being, being our role in supporting that.

Around the 'Champions' piece, I was lucky enough to be sitting at that table for part of the conversation and creating 'Champions' and just people that are willing to shout and say, "Look, here's some stuff, cool stuff, that we've tried locally, here's some things that have worked, here's how we've used Basketball, how might this work with you in your Cricket Club? How might this work for you in your Gaelic Club or in your Soccer Club?" I think are really, really important. So, either, either identifying 'Champions' in each of the Sports Codes and, and giving them a chance to develop the skills, or undertake the training, or take an OCN Course or be exposed to some of this stuff, I think's, really, really important. It's also just a job in creating that as well, so providing the training, providing the skills, making opportunities available for people to develop skills around how they can use their sport, which they are passionate about, to do this type of work as well in the future.

And then, just at the other end of the spectrum then, Northern Ireland has so many fantastic sporting greats. We have Rory McIlroy, we've all these guys who are competing on the World's stage who are fantastic 'Champions' and could be fantastic 'Champions' for this type of work. If they were to stand up and create a global movement and just said, "Look here, this wee corner of the country, this wee corner of the World, Northern Ireland, we've created all these great sporting athletics and we've achieved all of this stuff." Like, "I'm a 'Champion for Peace'." Or, "Hey, I think sport's a great tool for, for creating peace-building and reconciliation across the World." I think there is a real opportunity there to challenge those guys to step up and some guys do it really, really well, but I think there's an opportunity for us as organisations that are interested in this type of work to have those guys step up and basically become those 'Advocates' for sport for reconciliation and peace-building work.

Closing Remarks from Forum Chair, Dr Mark Browne

Dr Browne thanked Michael Boyd, Kathryn Hill, Diarmaid Marsden and Gareth Harper and invited the attendees to also thank the Panel.

In conclusion, Dr Browne thanked the Lord Mayor, the Junior Ministers and the presenters and all the young people who came and spoke so wonderfully about their engagement in the activities and what it has meant for them. He stated he thought they really are the best 'Ambassadors' and when they tell us that the impact these things have on them, it really inspires. He stated he certainly found it inspiring and commented on bringing a number of young people into his department at various conferences and the reaction from many of the staff, not all of whom are able to get out to see the activities on the ground, is absolutely fantastic. It makes a real emotional connection with staff and helps to sustain them as they're ploughing through business cases and administrative payments and correspondence cases and all the other daily grind of the Civil Service, but it really does help them. Dr Browne recorded thanks to all of the staff for their work. He further recorded thanks to CRC for organising the Forum and noted that it is clear how much of an impact sport is having on improving good relations. He stated he looked forward to watching the programmes showcased continue their good work.

Dr Browne reminded attendees that their feedback is taken very seriously and that it helps to shape how the various Engagement Forums were set up. Advising that there was an evaluation form in attendee's packs; he invited attendees to complete the form, that is, any comments to make, either things that didn't work quite so well, or anything that could be added or might be helpful to try and make the Forum more interesting and more relevant going forward. The information will be taken away and feed it into how the Engagement Forums are developed going forward.

Dr Browne noted that the next Engagement Forum would take place in May 2020 and reiterated his thanks for attendees arriving despite the inclement weather and thanked them for their positive engagement during the Forum.

The T:BUC Engagement Forum concluded with lunch and the Sports and Creativity Marketplace