

£200,000 PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS POWER OF COLLABORATION IN POST-CONFLICT NORTHERN IRELAND

- The National Heritage Lottery Fund is supporting the Conflict and Legacy Interpretive Network to deliver an exhibition, a conference and online resources –
- The Network aims to create greater understanding on legacy and reconciliation –

27 June 2025: The Conflict and Legacy Interpretive Network has been awarded over £200,000 in funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, demonstrating its ability to lead on the development of conflict and legacy programmes.

The Network, a first of its kind for Northern Ireland, was established in 2021 and is a collaboration between National Museums NI, the Museum of Free Derry/Bloody Sunday Trust and Healing Through Remembering. The Network comprises museums and heritage organisations with a defined interest in conflict and legacy. By bringing this expertise together, the Network aims to nurture diverse perspectives on Northern Ireland's conflict and the legacy of The Troubles, to inform the debate on reconciliation.

The funding will support a project entitled, Realising the Potential of the Conflict and Legacy Interpretive Network, specifically designed to strengthen the Network's impact. The appointment of a three-year Project Coordinator will widen and deepen the scope of engagement with other organisations and communities across Northern Ireland. Additional project outputs will include the delivery of a major conference and online resources, helping to position the Network as an exemplar for open and ethical dialogue around our contested history. It will also deliver a touring exhibition further highlighting how museums and heritage organisations can play an active role in how history is collected, interpreted and shared, to encourage understanding and reconciliation.

Dr Paul Mullan, Director of Northern Ireland, The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said, "We recognise that dealing with contested history can be challenging, but as our ongoing investment in reconciliation projects demonstrates, it's important that work to build greater understanding of the legacy of conflict is acknowledged. It's thanks to National Lottery players that this meaningful project by the Conflict and Legacy Interpretive Network has the potential to connect with communities across the region and beyond, and demonstrate how important continued dialogue about the past is in building a better future."

To mark the funding, a new collaborative display has been unveiled at Ulster Museum within its renowned The Troubles and Beyond gallery. The objects in the display represent contributions from the diverse members of the Conflict and Legacy Interpretive Network including a piece of stained glass from The Guildhall following the 1972 bombing, training logs for loyalist prisoners in Long Kesh and the belt worn by Patrick Doherty when he was shot dead on Bloody Sunday.

William Blair, Director of Collections at National Museums NI, highlighted that because The Troubles is a complex part of history with many different perspectives, the legacy of conflict needs to be interpreted sensitively and empathetically.

He said, "Peacebuilding is an ongoing process, and we're all part of that journey. Interpreting our recent past requires care and sensitivity. At the Ulster Museum, our Troubles and Beyond exhibition is intentionally presented as a work in progress, inviting visitors to ask: 'What's missing?' This question creates space for continued reflection and engagement, and thereby continual evolution. As the exhibition states, 'Whilst we have a shared past, we do not have a shared memory.' Everyone's lived experience holds its own truth, and that must be respected.

National Museums NI is committed to representing multiple perspectives through the diversity of our collection. More broadly, we're fortunate to be part of a wider network of organisations - brought together through the Conflict and Legacy Interpretive Network - who are actively engaged in exploring our recent

conflict and progressing peacebuilding as a result. We are grateful to The National Lottery Heritage Fund for recognising the value and potential impact of this collaborative effort.”

Cate Turner is Director at Healing Through Remembering – a cross-community organisation dedicated to facilitating discussion around conflict. She said, “Challenges as a result of the past remain evident here in Northern Ireland, and in responding to them, we need to ensure that we adopt an approach that not only engages those directly impacted, but future generations too. The Conflict and Legacy Interpretive Network allows us to leverage specialist expertise to ensure we engage people in ways that will benefit communities.”

Maeve McLaughlin, Director, Bloody Sunday Trust said that collaboration is central to the continued success of the Network. She concluded, “As the debate around the historical legacy of conflict here continues, museums and heritage organisations have been considering their role and purpose. This has been a difficult area, but in establishing the Network, we have found we can learn from each other and better define the approach. We are not simply institutions that record history, but experts in determining how history should be collected, interpreted and shared. We look forward to continuing to leverage this collective expertise across this new project.”

The Conflict and Legacy Interpretive Network exhibit will remain on display at Ulster Museum until the end of the year. For more information visit www.conflictlegacy.org.

For interview requests contact Navigator Blue: Rosi Florence | r.florence@navigatorblue.com | 079 2544 9187