



*The Causeway Programme:
a decade of cooperation*

Introduction

Mandated by young people at the Encounter Conference in Malahide, Dublin in 1997, the Causeway Programme set out to raise levels of contact between young people, and those who work with them, in Ireland and Britain. The core objective was to *strengthen and improve relationships between young people on the islands of Britain and Ireland*. This was achieved through the cooperation of the five partner regions - Ireland, Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England - in the provision of support for Youth Exchanges, Advance Planning Visits, Special Projects and Study Visits/Multiplier Activities.

A decade on, the programme has supported the activities of over 5,500 young people and youth workers on these islands.

This report is a celebration of all that the programme has achieved. It aims to give a flavour of what the projects were about, the impact of participation on the young people and the expertise that ensured the success of the projects. For each of the ten years of Causeway, we have selected one project or support activity to highlight in this report.

The conjoint management structure that continues to be a feature of Causeway demonstrates the commitment of both governments and is unique in the practice of exchange programmes administration. Causeway is administered by Léargas (Dublin), the British Council (London) and the Youth Council for Northern Ireland (Belfast).



The Distance Travelled: Technical Development

The collective experience and knowledge within the management structure informed the management and delivery of the Causeway Programme and gave rise to many of the innovative provisions within it.

Many improvements were made to the management of the Programme over the decade including the development of:

- Evaluation Toolkits for project promoters
- The Causeway Website, www.causewayyouth.org
- National Thematic Workshops
- Network-Building
- Contact Making Seminars
- Evaluation of the Programme

Application and Funding Process

In 2007 the management agencies restructured the application and funding process so that only the host project applied for funding, aligning Causeway with practices in other mobility programmes. Most recently, the 'flat rates' and 'lump-sum' funding amounts have been increased to come into line with other European Programmes. This adjustment has helped to reduce confusion for those groups accessing funding from more than one programme source.

Mapping the Decade: Key Projects and Events

1999: Northern Ireland Assembly Collapsed.
Establishment of the Scottish Parliament
Causeway Warrington Seminar

Boomerang Youth Theatre (IRL) partnered with the **Playhouse Theatre (NI)** to run a multiplier event entitled YouCAN over three days. The partnership secured partial funding from the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation. Causeway

supplemented the funding for the event, part of the focus of which was to train youth workers in the development of joint applications for youth exchange projects under Causeway. Forty Youth Arts administrators and leaders from different arts organisations from North and South of the border in Ireland worked on the theory and practice of cross-border exchange management. This led to many successful projects in the years to follow.

2000: John Gilligan (suspected for the murder of Veronica Guerin – Irish Crime Journalist) extradited from UK

Bill Clinton, in his last presidential visit, talked with Northern Ireland Politicians.

High rainfall caused severe flooding in England

Ovenden Youth Centre, West Yorkshire (ENG) partnered **Callan Youth Action (IRL)** to participate in a youth exchange to explore prejudice. The exchange led to significant development in understanding between the groups through the breaking down of stereotypes. The groups asked "What's it like to be me, where I live?" The young people learned to cooperate together in workshops focussing on Tradition and Culture; Political and Natural History; and Group Building by creating the conditions which allowed the young people to question and challenge their previously held prejudices.

2001: World Trade Centre attacked in New York
Police Service for Northern Ireland established
Foot and Mouth Disease Confirmed
Integrated Qualifications Framework recommended in Scotland

Young People – Fresh Vision: Encounter Youth Conference

Encounter was seen as the most appropriate vehicle for this Causeway event, given its bi-national remit to bring people together through its various initiatives to

set up networks and improve relationships across the various traditions on these islands. The core questions addressed at this conference focussed on the role of Youth Exchange in conflict resolution and attitudinal change: the performance of Causeway and what more could be done within the programme was looked at in this context.

Key outcomes and recommendations which were taken on board by the Causeway Programme including the need for:

- Greater integration with more focus needed on refugees and minority groups
- A longer-term strategy and long-term funding commitment
- Competence building around Conflict Resolution to provide a resource of expert exchange leaders.

2002: Ireland signed the Kyoto Protocol
Royal Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Queen Elizabeth II
Child Trust Fund (NI) established

Lesbian Gay Youth Group (LGYM), Manchester (ENG)

This drop-in centre in Manchester used creative activities to work with gay, lesbian and bisexual young people. Partnered with **OutYouth, Dublin (IRL)** since early 2001, their planning and preparatory process reflected good practice in the organisation of youth exchanges. The groups found that the creative arts were an empowering development tool for working with LGBT young people and the exchanges served to combat the isolation and fear experienced by them. Overall, the project greatly helped to improve the young people's sense of identity and increase their understanding of each other, creating a unity of purpose between the two groups. The partners continued to work together to secure further funding for a youth initiative project.

2003: Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix published
The World Special Olympics hosted in Ireland

Merthyr Vale and Aberfan Youth Project

Monaghan Youth Federation (IRL) and the **Devenish Partnership (ENG)** were partners in this tri-lateral exchange project led by **Methyr Vale and Aberfan Youth, Wales**. The project theme was the environment and the construction of a Peace Garden and the restoration of a historical wall were two key outputs. Activities were driven by a strong social enterprise vision.

Exchanges had been used in the past by each of the partner organisations, as a methodology for working with young people, with considerable benefit and positive effect. The project demonstrated reflective practice at its best when the leaders and young people reviewed their experience of their tri-lateral exchange.

2004: Ten new countries joined the European Union
Tsunami in South East Asia
A much hoped for Devolution deal for Northern Ireland was rejected.

Evaluation Seminar: Once upon a time in the North

Once Upon a Time in the North, a three-day Causeway evaluation and training event, was held in October 2004, in Belfast. Twenty-four youth workers from Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England participated.

The aim of the event was to:

- Conduct an overall evaluation of the combined experiences of these youth workers/leaders under Causeway and examine the impact of the activities within the participating organisations
- Determine the nature of training or other supports required for the future development of the Causeway Programme.

The Conference outcomes included the following concrete project proposals which were subsequently implemented in 2005-2006:

- **Training of Trainers**
A special project to develop a programme for the training of Causeway trainers.
- **YOUTH Forum**
A special project to explore the creation of a youth forum using the Causeway Programme.
- **Special Needs**
A special project aimed at gathering expertise and experience of youth workers who have worked on youth exchanges with young people with special needs. Guidelines of best practice were established.
- **Evaluation**
Coordinate a meeting to pilot evaluation tools for Causeway participants.
- **Web support**
A bulletin board on the Causeway website to allow the transfer of experiences and ideas and facilitate the development of stronger information links between youth workers and with the operating agencies.

2005: Cork was European Capital of Culture
Irish language was granted official status as an EU working language
UK General Election

NcompasS Project

As part of the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation the *Youth Council for Northern Ireland*, *The British Council (Belfast)* and *Léargas the Exchange Bureau*, jointly promoted a training course for teachers and youth workers in managing and leading developmental educational exchanges in a Programme called *NcompasS*. Funding was secured to provide a residential modular training programme accredited by the Open College Network, Northern Ireland, to Level 3. An additional aim of this project was to lower barriers which currently exist between the formal and non-formal education sectors. Each

trainee carried out an exchange and built a portfolio of evidence as part of the accreditation process. Twenty people were accredited to Level 3 in Intercultural Programmes Management as a result of this *NcompasS training*.

2006: Launch of You Tube
Average temperature in Britain highest since records began in 1659
Prince Philip met President Mary McAleese and Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern

Cháirde Social Action Exchange Ltd, Donegal (IRL) in partnership with **Vales Youth View, Derry (NI)**, conducted a project aimed at combating racism and xenophobia by addressing common issues between the groups i.e. their shared heritage and future in Europe. According to the partners, who had worked together the previous year, communication between exchanges was easily maintained and was key to the success of the project. Teambuilding helped to bond the group in spite of some challenging behaviour. Such contingencies had been prepared for however, and the exchange was not affected. One participant is quoted as saying "*I am sorry about my behaviour at the beginning, at the end I really, really enjoyed myself and I hope I get another chance*". The project brought together people who had problems with authority in the past, to work at building understanding of the difficulties and challenges that lay ahead for a united Ireland and a conflict-free Europe. The project achieved good penetration into the community by holding two equestrian open days on the participants' return, with an exhibition of their exchange on display around the venue.

2007: Madeleine McCann Disappeared in Portugal
Gordon Brown succeeded Tony Blair as Prime Minister in the UK

A partnership between **West Bowling Youth Initiative, Yorkshire, (ENG)** and **MARDI (Movement against Racism, Discrimination, and Intolerance), Donegal (IRL)**, resulted in a project called *Diversity Links*. This was a special project to create a toolkit for integration and use in intercultural youth training. The aim was to create innovative, workable and user-friendly resources that would promote best practice in intercultural youth training. The output of the project was a filmed learning resource for young people, trainers and leaders, for integration in intercultural learning. A further objective was to train the peer-youth-trainers over the course of the project in the use of these materials. The final DVD contained four trainings derived directly from the input of the young people. The integration between the groups was a highlight of the project, given the ethnic diversity within the partner groups. As one participant put it "*we would never normally hang out with white youths but we actually became friends.*" This project has had far-reaching results as a consequence of MARDI's subsequent collaboration with Sligo IT focussing on the college's minority ethnic students.

2008: Ireland said No to the Lisbon Treaty in a Referendum
Ian Paisley retired from Northern Ireland Politic

This project, a partnership between **North Yorkshire County Council (ENG)** and the **Western Education and Library Board (NI)**, resulted from a contact-making seminar hosted in Derry. It sought to increase understanding between young people, challenge stereotypical perceptions of themselves and others, and to celebrate diversity by engaging young people in a broad range of arts and outdoor activities. It further aimed to establish an environment that would lead to a positive working relationship involving young people in the planning, preparation and taking part in an international exchange. Cultural activities undertaken included art, poetry, music, mural painting and graffiti. Participation in a music festival also constituted part of the exchange experience.

As part of the project evaluation, feedback from participants highlighted 'increased confidence in young people and the awareness of how similar young people from both Derry and Scarborough were' as a principal impact of the experience. The group presented their project to the conjoint Causeway Management Committee at a meeting in Stormont.

Conclusion

There is no question that Causeway has been a resounding success! Much of the experience and learning resident in the operating agencies has made it so. Project evaluations repeatedly cited the benefit of increased contact and new understanding of young people in other parts of these islands as a result of participation.

The programme has introduced many new practices and innovations to the technical support for programme end-users. Several young people progressed to other programmes having had their first introduction to exchange activity under the Causeway Programme. This aligns well with the values underpinning the programme.

Funding was ring-fenced to ensure that the original driver for the establishment of the programme was enabled i.e. that young people from Britain and Northern Ireland could conduct exchanges. Causeway is unique in the provision of ring-fenced funding to this end.

The final words should be given to the young people themselves as there can be no better testament to the success of the Causeway Programme.

What they said...

"The whole point of the project was to make a training DVD which would promote integration and intercultural training. I think that the project did a lot more than that." *MARDI (2007)*

"You couldn't believe I would make so much progress in just one year... If you'd seen me a year ago you wouldn't have thought it was possible"
(UK participant 2002)

"I am sorry about my behaviour at the beginning, at the end I really, really enjoyed myself and I hope I get another chance" *(Cháirde/Vales Youth 2006)*

"If I want it enough, I'll have it."
(UK participant 1999)

"You couldn't anticipate that the groups would gel as well or as quickly as they did" *(Leader 2004)*

"Teens all around the world are about the same" *(Evaluation 2000)*

"I was amazed at how young people could change so significantly in attitude in such a short time."
(Leader North Yorkshire/Derry 2008)

"Only thing stopping me is myself"
Irish participant (1999)

"Myself and 19 others cried on stage... very emotional. It was amazing. None of us will ever be the same again"
(2003 Questionnaire feedback)