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HARC Community Newsletter - First Edition - December 2025

# HARC Project

## Healthy and Active Rural Communities

L-R Martin Duffy, CEO, Derg Valley Care, Shauna McClenaghan, Joint CEO, Inishowen Development Partnership (IDP), Dr. Jason Foy, (Department for Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs), Cllr Paul Canning, Cathaoirleach of Donegal County Council, Andrew Ward, Joint CEO, (IDP), Gina McIntyre, CEO, SEUPB, Philip O'Kane, CEO, RAPID NI, Caroline Devlin, HARC Project Manager, RAPID NI, Ald. Níree McMorris, Deputy Mayor, Derry City & Strabane District Council, Liam Caffrey (Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht), Helen Nolan, CEO, Sprai agus Spórt.



**Growing Rural Connections:  
New Funding Supports Rural Health, Wellbeing and Social Enterprise.**

Rural Area Partnership Incorporated (RAPID) are delighted to announce that they have been awarded €7,601,993 from the PEACEPLUS Programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), to deliver the Healthy Active Rural Communities (HARC) Project.

This transformative project will enhance health and wellbeing services across rural Derry City & Strabane District Council area and the Inishowen region of Donegal County Council.

Led by RAPID, HARC will be delivered in collaboration with Inishowen Development Partnership, Derg Valley Care & Healthy Living Centre and Sprai agus Spórt.

### Together we aim to:

- ◆ Expand rural family support and wellness services

- ◆ Provide targeted support for older people, carers and individuals with disabilities
- ◆ Utilise our natural environment for nature-based wellbeing programmes
- ◆ Strengthen rural social enterprises to build resilient communities

The Launch of the HARC project took place in the An Grianan Hotel, Donegal on Tuesday 7th October 2025, marking a significant milestone in rural development and community wellbeing across the border regions of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

We are excited to bring this ambitious project to life and make a lasting impact on rural communities.

### Project Timeline

**2022** - Cross Border & Cross Community consultations with stakeholders/partners.  
**2023** - Localised community codesign sessions undertaken with Rural Community Groups, Youth, Health Statutory Agencies etc responses resulted in evidenced significant need and support for the HARC Project.  
**2024** - Application submitted to PEACEPLUS (SEUPB)  
**June 2025** - Application successful.  
**7th October 2025** - Launch of HARC Project



# A Foreword from the Chairperson ~ Jim McColgan, RAPID NI



## We are thrilled to present the first edition of our HARC Community Newsletter

We are delighted to announce some wonderful news: the HARC Project has been awarded an incredible €7.6 million in funding under the PEACEPLUS Programme managed by the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB). This substantial investment allows us to immediately roll out a comprehensive range of activities and services across our rural communities.

As Chairperson, of RAPID, I am particularly pleased that we have been selected as the Lead Partners for this initiative. This provides an excellent opportunity to collaborate closely with our dedicated partners, Inishowen Development Partnership, Spraioi agus Spórt and Derg Valley Care, Healthy Living Centre, turning our shared vision into meaningful action.

This journey began several years ago with a simple yet powerful ambition: to ensure that rural communities have equitable access to vibrant, local services and activities. Thanks to the unwavering commitment of our staff, partners and key stakeholders, that ambition is now becoming a reality.

We extend our sincere gratitude to our funders for recognising the importance of rural support and for believing in our mission. With their backing, we are well positioned to make a profound and lasting difference.

### This project will strategically focus on three key objectives:

- Improve Health & Wellbeing in rural areas
- Use & protect natural rural assets for community benefit
- Build long-term capacity in local social enterprises

This newsletter provides a brief insight into the project, including photos and comments from guest speakers at our launch event. We look forward to working together to make this project a resounding success, leaving a positive and enduring impact across our communities.

Thank you for your continued support.

### 1.

#### **HARC Family Support Programme (supporting every stage of family life)**

The HARC Family support programme offers a range of tailored initiatives designed to support children, parents, older people, carers & those with health conditions.

*Child Development Programmes* to support parents in key child development i.e. - baby massage, baby sensory play, family nutrition, behavioural programmes, sleep support etc.

*Parent Wellness & Support Programme* to optimise parental mental and physical health i.e. pregnancy yoga, fitness classes, social cafes, peer support classes etc.

*Summer Activity Programmes* to provide children and young people with opportunities to interact with peers during school holidays i.e. cross-border activities, kayaking, hiking team-building etc.

*Older People's Programme* designed to ensure older people have the opportunity to engage within their community through wellbeing activities i.e. arts & crafts, exercise, baking etc.

*Carer's Support Programme* designed to support carers of all ages through health & wellbeing activities.

### 2.

#### **HARC Health & Wellbeing Through Nature Programme**

The HARC Health & Wellbeing Through Nature Programme will deliver cross border benefits by merging the local specialisms of 'Blue Care' (Inishowen) & 'Green Care' (Faghán, Sperrin & Derg).

*Blue Care Therapy Programme* - This inter generational programme has been designed to optimise the health & wellbeing of citizens by using the 'Blue' assets i.e. lakes and coastlines to provide activities such as, paddleboarding, kayaking, sea swimming etc.

*Green Care Therapy Programme* - has been designed to optimise the health & wellbeing of citizens by using the 'Green' assets i.e. mountains & forests to provide activities such as forest mindfulness, mountain climbing, cycling etc.

*Cross Border Community Hiking /Walking Programme* - this intergenerational programme will enable families to participate in monthly hiking and walking activities.

*Eco Environmental Activity Programme* - Improve your health & wellbeing whilst protecting the natural assets. Activities will include beach & forest cleansing, planting, community gardening etc.

### 3.

#### **HARC Rural Social Enterprise Development Programme**

The HARC Rural Social Enterprise Development Programme will build sectoral capacity across the target rural areas. Delivered to 15 social enterprises, this has been designed to enable rural communities to sustain & further expand key services locally.

*Specialist Social Enterprise Mentoring Programme* - Each of the 15 participating social enterprises will be provided with 24 specialist mentoring sessions.

*Social Enterprise Shared Resources Programme* - Project partners will develop a shared resources framework for access by the 15 enterprises. This will enable organisations to benefit from specialist support such as budgeting, strategic planning, application development etc.

*Accredited Social Enterprise Development Modules* - 3 accredited social enterprise development modules will be delivered e.g. Business Development, Financial Management etc.

*Social Impact Return Training Programme* - Key representatives from each of the 15 social enterprises will undertake a social impact return training programme.



# A New Beginning for Rural Communities

*Snapshots from the official launch of the HARC Project, along with inspiring words from our guest speakers who helped mark the occasion*



Jim McColgan, Chairperson, RAPID NI, Gina McIntyre, CEO, SEUPB, Philip O'Kane, CEO, RAPID NI, Caroline Devlin, HARC Project Manager, RAPID NI.

**SEUPB Chief Executive Gina McIntyre said:**  
“HARC represents a bold and compassionate response to the real challenges faced by rural communities. “Through this €7.6 million investment under PEACEPLUS, we are supporting a cross-border, cross-community partnership that will improve health and wellbeing, strengthen local resilience and help build a more inclusive and connected society for generations to come.”



L– R Andrew Ward, Joint CEO, IDP, Gina McIntyre, CEO, SEUPB, Cllr. Paul Canning, Cathaoirleach of Donegal County Council, Shauna McClenaghan, Joint CEO, IDP.



**Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister, Andrew Muir MLA, via video, said:** “I am very pleased that my Department is working in partnership with the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht in the Republic of Ireland and SEUPB, in providing funding for this investment area under the PEACEPLUS programme. “The Rural Regeneration and Social Inclusion Investment Area will support social, economic and environmental projects through health and wellbeing focused solutions, while also tackling social isolation and promoting enhanced social inclusion, “The HARC Project will increase the provision of Health & Wellbeing services across the three counties helping create a rural community where people want to live, work, be active and prosper in a sustainable and environmentally responsible way.”



**Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, TD Jerry Buttimer, via video** expressed gratitude for the projects vision and its potential to enhance health and wellbeing services across rural areas. “The project is part of a broader initiative to foster community connections and promote social inclusion, ensuring the rural communities are equipped to support their residents’ needs and aspirations. The project will yield long-term advantages for the region.”



**Deputy Mayor of Derry City & Strabane District Council, Alderman Niree McMorris,** “projects like this are the result of a tremendous amount of work, involving individuals, organisations, communities and government at various levels. The HARC Project is set to transform rural life by enhancing wellbeing across all life stages—from infancy to older age, including those living with illness or disability. It will foster healthier, more cohesive communities and establish a replicable model for rural intervention across other regions.”

**“Other guest speakers at the launch shared their enthusiasm, praising the project's vision and the positive impact it will deliver”**



Cllr. Paul Canning



Andrew Ward



Shauna McClenaghan



Philip O'Kane



Jim McColgan



# HARC PROJECT LAUNCH



**Philip O'Kane, CEO, RAPID NI**

"This initiative aims to reshape rural living by promoting wellbeing from childhood through later life, while supporting those facing illness or disability. By strengthening access to vital family and health services in remote areas, it will nurture stronger, more connected communities."



**Caroline Delvin,  
HARC Project Manager**

"This project will galvanise rural communities by; increasing access to essential family support and wellness services in remote areas, and building the capacity of rural social enterprises to sustain these interventions long-term."

*Check out our partners and how to get involved in the HARC Project*

*For full details, just click the links or get in touch using the contact information provided.*

Find out more about us and  
our Project Partners by  
clicking on the links



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Derg Valley Care & Healthy Living Centre

<http://s443960577.initial-website.co.uk/about-us/healthy-living-centre/>