



Border communities are in the spotlight

A MAJOR new report which considers the challenges and opportunities in connecting Irish border towns and villages has been launched in Blacklion, Co Cavan.

The report was co-funded by the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) and the Higher Education Authority (HEA).

Deirdre Ryan, IFI Board member, Dr Niall Holohan, North South Ministerial Council, and Colm Tóibín, renowned Irish novelist and journalist, were on hand to launch the report.

One of its key findings highlights the real need for more joined-up community and stakeholder collaboration across regional jurisdictions in order to secure greater socio-economic benefits.

Conducted by the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD), the report centres on a number of communities along the border area. Core funding to the value of €450,000 was provided to the ICLR in 2005 by the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) to research and document good practices in, and provide training on, spatial planning and balanced local and regional development on the island of Ireland.

The report also identifies frequent cases where a 'disconnect' exists, not only on a North-South basis but also on an East-West basis, and that this disconnect leads to many local well intentioned projects not achieving their full potential and remaining largely stand-alone and isolated.

Speaking at the launch of the report, Deirdre Ryan said: "We welcome this report as an important contribution to our shared goals of peace and reconciliation on this island and an opportunity for the Fund to contribute to the strategic development of cross-border links."

John Driscoll, Director of ICLR, added: "Cross-border collabora-

tion on the island of Ireland continues to evolve – projects and partnerships are much more complex than they were in the early 1990s and greater emphasis is being placed on meeting local needs through the adoption of an integrated and holistic approach based on a longer-term vision and strategy for cooperation."

The report takes an in-depth look at a number of cross-border towns and villages including Lifford-Strabane; Kiltyclogher-Cashel/Scribbagh-Garrison-Rossinver; Glenfarne-Blacklion-Belcoo; Clones-Rosslea; Newtownbutler-Lisnaskea; and Castleblayney-Crossmaglen. In addition, it considers the nature of the cross-border relationship between Truagh-Aughnacloy and Pettigo-Tullyhummion-Kesh in an observational capacity.



Dr Niall Holohan, Deputy Joint Secretary North South Ministerial Council; Colm Toibin, novelist and journalist; Caroline Creamer, NIRSA; Deirdre Ryan, IFI Board Member