

Annual Report 2025



Centre for
**democracy
& peace**

**Building
a better
tomorrow**



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Content

Chairperson's Remarks | 04

Acknowledgments | 05

About the Centre for Democracy and Peace | 06

Directors and Executive Team | 07

Projects and Highlights

» Fellowship Programme 24/25 | 08

» Fellowship Alumni Series | 14

» Visit to Angelicum University in Rome | 15

» Climate Democracy Seminar | 16

Contact Details | 17





Chairperson's Remarks

As we reflect on the past year, we do so against the backdrop of an increasingly complex geopolitical climate. Northern Ireland continues to navigate the delicate balance between its past and future, as global instability and political divisions place pressure on our institutions and communities. Yet, amid these challenges, our commitment to peace, democratic values, and reconciliation remains stronger than ever. The Centre for Democracy and Peace (CDP) has continued to serve as a beacon of hope and innovation, providing a vital platform for constructive dialogue, cross-community engagement, and visionary leadership.

I want to take this opportunity to express my deepest thanks to the CDP team, our dedicated partners, and the many friends of the Centre who have supported our mission over the past year. I am especially grateful to CEO Eva Grosman, Programme Manager Zachary Hutchinson, our advisory board members, and our partner organisations across business, government, and civil society. Together, you have helped CDP expand its impact.

This year, we saw the Fellowship Programme flourish, with a record number of applicants and a truly outstanding cohort. Our Fellows led inspiring Design Thinking projects, one of which has already influenced public discourse and policy development in Northern Ireland. The Climate Democracy Seminar, the Fellowship Alumni Series, and our international engagements, most notably with our visit to Angelicum University, Rome, demonstrate the Centre's growing role as a hub for democratic innovation, leadership development, and knowledge exchange. CDP continues to bridge divides, challenge assumptions, and equip leaders with the tools to create a more inclusive, prosperous future.

I am also delighted to announce the Fellowship Forum, a new initiative that will play a vital advisory role in shaping the direction and impact of the Fellowship Programme. Comprising members of the House of Lords committed to leadership development and peacebuilding in Northern Ireland, the Forum will offer strategic guidance, promotes the Fellowship, and advances our mission for a shared and peaceful future.

Finally, I want to share with you that after four deeply rewarding years, I will be stepping down as Chair of the Board. It has been an honour to serve this extraordinary organisation and to work alongside so many passionate and principled individuals. Though I am stepping aside, I remain a lifelong advocate for the mission and values of CDP through my membership of the Fellowship Forum.

I look forward to seeing the Centre continue to flourish under the chairmanship of Darragh McCarthy in the years ahead, and I wait with anticipation to see how his leadership will elevate CDP to new heights.

Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick



Acknowledgments

Our work would not be possible without assistance from many public, private, and community partners. We are truly grateful for all the support we have received this year.

A special thanks to

- » Allstate Northern Ireland
- » Brown O'Connor Communications
- » Camlin Group
- » Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Republic of Ireland
- » The Embassy of the United Kingdom in Dublin
- » FinTrU
- » Fujitsu NI
- » ESB Networks
- » Irish American Partnership
- » Irish Museum of Modern Art
- » Northern Ireland Electricity Networks
- » Polish Cultural Institute in London
- » Shared Island Unit, the Department of the Taoiseach
- » Trinity College Dublin
- » Ulster Carpets
- » University of Oxford
- » U.S. Consulate General Belfast



About the Centre for Democracy and Peace

The Centre for Democracy and Peace is a charity based in Northern Ireland. Its purpose is to uphold and share the values and principles of democracy in order to build peace, stability, and reconciliation.

CDP is committed to supporting the peace process; changing attitudes; building a normal society; and sharing our experience with others in conflict. CDP's mission is to provide innovative programmes and solutions, based on lessons from the Irish peace process, that enable leaders from across society to respond effectively to social, political, and economic challenges across the globe.

The charitable objectives of the Centre for Democracy and Peace are:

- » To advance citizenship and community development by upholding and sharing the values and principles of democracy in order to build peace, stability, and reconciliation; and to support leadership within civil society and political parties to address grievances and to build confidence in political institutions.
- » To advance human rights, conflict resolution, and reconciliation by the removal of fear from and the offering of hope to divided communities and to create a society with a shared sense of responsibility, opportunity, community, and above all a shared sense of humanity, based upon respect for and tolerance of diversity; and to empower and enable communities to develop bespoke solutions that address and remove the causes of division and violent conflict.
- » To advance education by providing a knowledge exchange platform in democracy and peace building to facilitate research and discussion in partnership with government and civil society on the development and implementation of policies and programmes that build a shared and united community; to host a fellowship programme to pass on learning from the peace process generation to current and future leaders; and to capture and document the lessons and experiences from Northern Ireland and other places which have experienced violent political conflicts.

Directors and Executive Team

Chairman Emeritus

- » Lord John Alderdice

Chair

- » Baroness Margaret Ritchie

Directors

- » Ciarán Ó Cuinn
- » Darragh McCarthy
- » Christina Bates

CEO and Company Secretary

- » Eva Grosman

Advisory Board

- » Professor Harvey Maylor
- » Saul Betmead de Chasteigner
- » Dr Tom Kelly OBE FCIPR

Fellowship Programme Advisory Board

- » Darragh McCarthy (Chair)
- » Nick Coburn
- » Dalreen Buchanan
- » Derek Hynes
- » Gordon Parkes
- » Peter Cunningham
- » Christina Bates
- » Melanie McMordie

Programme Manager

- » Zachary Hutchinson

Programme Coordinator

- » Nicole Fintel

Website and Graphic Designer

- » Irka Laskowska

Fellowship Programme 2024/2025

Since 2021, the Fellowship Programme has provided the opportunity to reimagine complex political, business, and civic leadership in Northern Ireland through innovation and capacity building to address the challenges of today for the prosperity of tomorrow.

The 2024/25 Fellowship Programme demonstrated strong success in deepening cross-sectoral leadership, fostering meaningful relationships, and inspiring real-world impact across Northern Ireland. With a record number of applicants and high engagement levels from Fellows throughout the year, the programme continues to grow in scale, diversity, and influence. Fellows consistently rated the experience highly, particularly valuing the relational development, exposure to diverse perspectives, and opportunities to lead and collaborate across business, political, and civic sectors. Over 90% of participants have already applied their learning in professional or community settings, with them describing the experience as “inspiring,” “transformational,” and “life-changing.”

To learn more about the Fellowship Programme, please visit our website or LinkedIn page to keep up to date with programme announcements.



We are once again truly grateful for the support of our partners and sponsors: Department of Foreign Affairs, Camlin Group, FinTrU, Fujitsu NI, NIE Networks, Ulster Carpets, Irish American Partnership, and Allstate NI.

Principal funder



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PARTNERSHIP

The programme would also not be possible without the vital support of our advisory board:

- » Darragh McCarthy – CEO, FinTrU (Chair)
- » Derek Hynes – Managing Director, NIE Networks
- » Gordon Parkes – Executive Director, People & Culture, NIE Networks
- » Peter Cunningham – CEO, Camlin Group
- » Christina Bates – CFO, Allstate NI
- » David Clements – Client Director, Fujitsu NI
- » Melanie McMordie – Managing Director, Fujitsu NI
- » Nick Coburn – Managing Director, Ulster Carpets
- » Dalreen Buchanan – Business Support Manager, Ulster Carpets

A special mention this year must go to David Clements, former Client Director of Fujitsu NI, who recently stepped down from the advisory board after four years. David was an integral part of the formation of the Fellowship, and we are truly grateful for his insight and leadership since the beginning. We wish him well in his future endeavours.



Design Thinking in action

This year's Design Thinking module featured four group projects:

- 1. Safeguarding Democracy**
Tackling Intimidation & Abuse in Elections
- 2. Inclusive Mobility**
Rethinking Public Space & Transport
- 3. Empowering Rural Communities**
Expanding Skills for Inclusive Growth
- 4. Amplifying Northern Ireland's Music Industry**
Why we need a Music Champion & Development Body

Of these four projects, two have been pursued by their groups. In response to the Safeguarding Democracy project launch, BBC NI featured powerful testimonies across radio and TV from MLAs which evidenced the extent of this challenge to democracy. The topic was covered on the BBCNI website, the View, Sunday Politics, and BBC Radio Ulster, with specific mentions of the project's recommendations.

The project, Amplifying NI's Music Industry, is also seeking out meetings with Executive Ministers and other stakeholders to establish a music development body, Music NI.

The Fellowship in one word

The Class of 2025 were asked to describe the 24/25 Fellowship in one word.

Ambitious
Connection
Inspiring
Enlightening
Transformational
Energising
Amazing
Life-changing

The Class of 2025



Declan Barry

Founder & CEO of
ExportExplore



Ruth Barry

National Influencing
Manager at Alzheimer's
Society



Nicola Brogan MLA

Sinn Féin MLA for West
Tyrone



Scott Carson

Office Manager for Paul
Givan MLA (DUP)



Brendan Corr

Policy Researcher for NI
Assembly's Leader of the
Opposition, Matthew
O'Toole MLA



Fiona Corvan

Engagement Lead at
ICRIR



Dr David Cummings

Staff Officer in the
Northern Ireland Civil
Service



Fiona Derry

Director of Legal, HR &
Compliance at Derry
Group Ireland



Charlotte Dryden

CEO of Oh Yeah Music
Centre



Róisín Finnegan

Independent Business
Contractor



Karen Gilgunn

Senior Communications &
Influencing Lead at
Mencap NI



Carl Hashim

Head of Regulation
Strategy at NIE Networks



Blaithnid Hughes

Head of Service for
Anaesthetics, Theatres
& Critical Care Services,
Southern HSC Trust



Cahir Hughes

Head of the Electoral
Commission Northern
Ireland



Curtis Irvine

Policy & Communications
Manager for Kate Nicholl
MLA (Alliance Party)



Sam Jinadu

Head of Constitution and
Special Projects at the
Northern Ireland Office



Cllr Alan Lewis

DUP Councillor in Newry,
Mourne and Down District
Council



Vincenta Leyden

Service Development
Manager with the MND
Association



**Máirtín Mac
Gabhann MBE**

Founder of Donate4Dáithí



Andrea MacLean

Social Value Adviser at
the Strategic Investment
Board



Shauna Mageean

EU Affairs Manager at the
NI Assembly



Siobhán McAlister

SDLP Chief of Staff and
Senior Adviser to Claire
Hanna MP



Jane McCooey

Executive Director and Chief
of Staff to Chief Information
Officer, Enterprise Technology
and Services at Morgan Stanley



Róisín Muirhead

Senior Legal Specialist
at Robin AI



Aidan Sloane

COO & Executive Director
at Belfast Metropolitan
College



Cllr Brian Smyth

Green Party Councillor in
Belfast City Council



Susan Walker

Inclusive Diversity
& Equity Manager at
Allstate NI



Fellowship Alumni Series

Now in its fifth year, the Fellowship Programme has almost 100 alumni across four cohorts, including Economy Minister Caoimhe Archibald MLA, several MLAs and local councillors, as well as senior public sector and civic leaders.

The Fellowship alumni network had four events this year:

- » Alumni attended the launch of the 2024/25 programme at Stormont.
- » The annual reception hosted by Joint Irish Secretary Laurence Simms at his residence in Belfast.
- » Public Life and Personal Morality webinar led by Daniel Greenberg CB, Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards.
- » NI Assembly networking breakfast featuring a presentation on the Assembly's legislative system.



Visit to Angelicum University in Rome

In November we were delighted to travel to Rome to present at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas - Angelicum with chairman emeritus Lord Alderdice.

CDP facilitated a discussion with students from the St John Paul II Institute of Culture on the role of religion and identity in conflict and peace, with a special focus on Northern Ireland. Thank you to the St John Paul II Institute of Culture for inviting us and we look forward to continuing this relationship into the future.

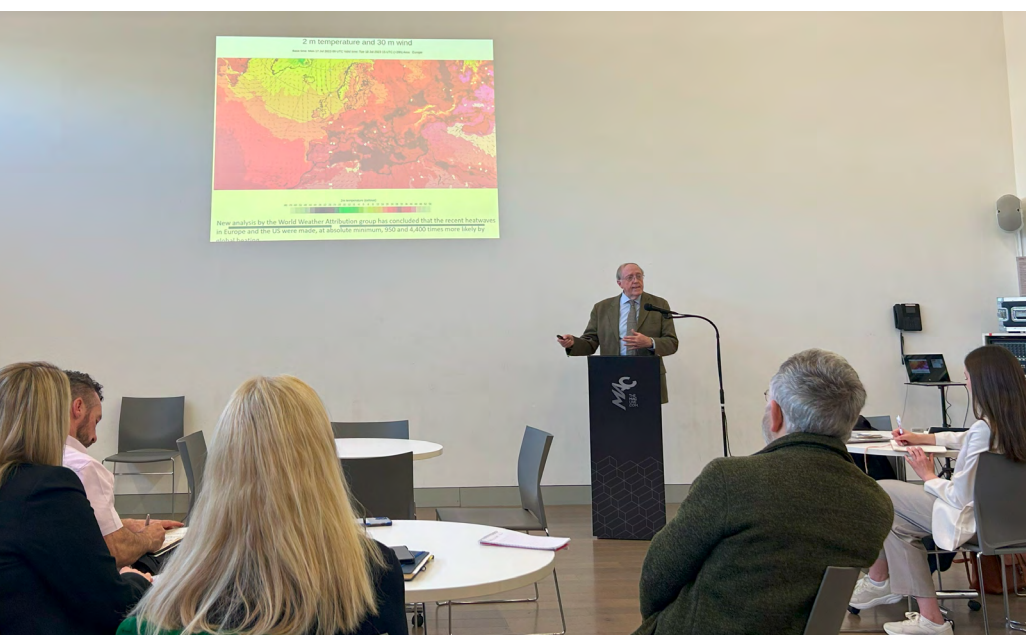
Many thanks to Dariusz Karłowicz, Joanna Paciorek, and their colleagues at the JPII Institute of Culture, Angelicum, and Teologia Polityczna for their leadership, vision, and hospitality.



Climate Democracy Seminar

In October CDP hosted the Agriculture, Land Use, and Climate Democracy seminar at The MAC, Belfast.

The day was filled with thought-provoking discussions on the future of climate action and policy innovation, focusing on topics such as advancing sustainable energy solutions, courageous policy-making, and democracy as non-violent disagreement.



Thank you to all the speakers who spoke at the seminar (left to right): Prof John Sweeney (Maynooth University), Prof John Barry (QUB), John McCallister (Young Farmers' Clubs of Ulster), Prof David Rooney (QUB), Kiera O'Brien (EPA Youth Advisory Council), Jane Corderoy (DAERA), John McLenaghan (Ulster Farmer's Union), and Ian Marshall OBE (QUB).

Contact Us

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