



Teach Na Fáilte



Republican Socialist Ex-Prisoner & Family Support

Volume 1, Issue 1

January/March 2003

Current Programme of Teach na Failte

- Provision of an advice service
- Training courses for ex-prisoners and their families
- Networking with a wide range of complementary organisations
- Developing local community partnerships
- Developing a database of Republican Socialist ex-prisoners

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What is Teach na Failte?

Teach na Failte was established in December 1996 after numerous discussions amongst Republican Socialist ex-prisoners, serving prisoners and their families. It is a properly constituted and recognised charitable organisation with an overseeing management committee with local committees in Strabane, Belfast, Cork, Dundalk and Dublin.

Teach na Failte is a positive vehicle for change aimed at equipping the Republican Socialist community with the broad range of support assistance necessary in the transition stage between armed conflict and the search for non-violent approaches to conflict. The project is based on the principle of self-help and mutual aid to address the needs of a particularly marginalised section of our community thus promoting and assisting justice, peace and reconciliation in Ireland.

The problems faced by both the ex-prisoner population and their families has been well documented and researched. "Back from the Margins" and

"Out of the Shadows" are two reports commissioned by Teach na Failte and these give the reader a valuable insight into the issues faced by the Republican Socialist community, what is evident however is the determination of this community to end the exclusion practised against it by others.

We are proud of the Republican Socialist tradition and history and whilst many would like to exclude us, we believe we can offer a positive contribution to the search for peace and reconciliation in Ireland.

The Teach na Failte committee have worked tirelessly over a number of years to establishing itself and the future, whilst being a challenge to everyone, will contribute a positive injection into finding new methods based on the concept of conflict resolution in resolving our differences.

Funding for Teach na Failte

Teach na Failte, a Strabane based project to assist ex- Republican Socialist prisoners has received grant aid from European peace funding packages.

A large chunk of the grant-aid came from the Programme for Peace and Reconciliation Peace 2.

Andy Gallagher, speaking on behalf of the Management Committee, said: "This is fantastic news, this funding presents Teach na Failte with the opportunity not only to deliver a first class educational programme and a family support worker, but on an all-Ireland basis it will seriously examine different approaches to building and consolidating peace at grass roots level."

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Funding for Teach na Failte

Continued from front page

“In a very imaginative approach, one aspect of this project will attempt to address the political differences within the nationalist community which have arisen out of thirty years of conflict. Such an undertaking is by no means an easy task.”

The management committee also released details of the educational classes currently being advertised. These include various types of computer courses such as CLAIT and ECDL.

The courses being delivered will be suited to each individual and the group intends to have a laptop library where students can borrow a computer.

Facilitator, Willie Gallagher, said: “We aim to set up innovative programmes introducing marginalised sections of our society to training, education and the world of work.”

As part of its Cross-Border Conflict Management project, the group has appointed Eddie McGarrigle as Project Manager, Paul Gallagher as Project Development Officer, along with Miss Kirsty McColgan, who is the Administrator for the project. In December 2002, Miss Catriona Dunleavy came on board as Teach na Failte Administrator.

Eddie McGarrigle, who has worked as the groups coordinator for a number of years, said: “This is an exiting project which I am looking forward to very much.”

“One aspect of it will be the delivery of accredited con-

flict management training for individuals from all areas, this can only be viewed as a positive step forwards.”

“Despite cease-fires and political mismanagement based on a lack of trust, the Republican Socialist community and tradition will be challenging itself and other sections of society to look at building peace on a micro level, in other words at community level where working class people who are the ones who suffered most during the conflict can see real peace.”

Project Development Officer, Paul Gallagher, added: “Teach na Failte aims to take advantage of opportunities arising from peace by providing capacity building training course, mediation courses, networking with not only the community and voluntary sector but also the statutory and business sectors thus promoting peace, reconciliation and an understanding within and between our communities and, I am very much looking forward to this challenge.”

The Teach na Failte project has been supported through the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation and the Community Foundation NI.

Editorial

Another year is over and in common with many other organisations, Teach na Failte reviews the work it has done and what remains to be done. And while no project can afford to be complacent about its activities, 2002 has been a year of achievement, with the group playing an active and visible role in the local community, both in Strabane and Belfast.

It is our intention to extend activities throughout Ireland, wherever there are Republican Socialist ex-prisoners it is our desire to reach out and offer whatever help, assistance and guidance we can.

Already we have become aware of a wide range of problems suffered by the ex-prisoner population. We can name marital difficulties, drink problems, unemployment and low self-esteem as just some of the contributory factors in the life difficulties of ex-prisoners.

There is no easy answer to this and we in Teach na Failte make no claim to having a magic remedy. However, we do believe that, by having a positive approach to the human condition and inspiring self-belief and confidence in the individual, we can go a long way towards rebuilding the confidence and spirit of ex-prisoners.

While we do individual counselling and group work, we know from experience that ex-prisoners prefer to do things for themselves rather than have it done for them. Already we have seen how through the Memorial Committee many have found a useful and positive activity that has many side benefits. At the end of the day it is only when people begin to take both control and responsibility for their own lives that they can make a difference. Teach na Failte aims to help make

Dessie O'Hare transferred to Castlerea

Teach na Failte has been lobbying the Irish Government for over 3 years regarding the case of Dessie O'Hare. Despite being deemed a qualifying prisoner under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement the Irish Government broke with precedent and instead referred Dessie's case to the Release of Prisoners Commission.

This resulted in a delay of over 2 years with the Commission referring Dessie to over 4 different psychoanalysts and psychiatrists. The Commission returned their findings to Justice Minister McDowell on 1st July 2002.

These findings recommended that Dessie be moved to Castlerea Open Prison, Roscommon and that he begin a pre-release programme.

Since Dessie transferred to Castlerea, Teach na Failte has led a number of delegation visits and has been invited by the Irish Government Prisons Division to take part in Dessie's pre-release programme.

Dessie is due for parole in July 2003, and like all prisoners involved in the conflict, deserves the chance of a new life having spent all his adult life in prison.

Dessie released the following statement on his transfer and spoke of his aspirations for the future:

"I welcome the steps taken by the Irish Government to bring closure on past conflict. My transfer and those of my comrades to Castlerea is an act of good faith by the authorities. I welcome it as a sign of acceptance by those authorities not only of the integrity of the INLA cease-fire but of the determination of republican socialist prisoners and ex-prisoners to make a positive and progressive contribution to Irish society. I would call on the government to urgently address their complete lack of funding for groups such as Teach na Failte who are the safety net for former prisoners and their families.

Let me state clearly, firmly and unequivocally my views on the political situation and my part in past conflict.

While my war is over my struggle for the rights of all shades of the working class continues. I believe that the conditions for armed struggle against British imperialism no longer exist. I unequivocally accept the INLA cease-fire statement of August 22nd 1998 and fully associate myself with the apology contained

therein. Much pain has been endured in the past and as a soldier I played a part in both inflicting and enduring pain.

However it is time for all of us to move away from demonising either individuals or groups in society. The vilification of myself by sections of the media and by

others, who should know better, may make headlines but contribute nothing to the sum total of human happiness. I owe a great debt of gratitude to my wife and children, they have suffered far more than I because of my imprisonment. As an individual I hope to have the opportunity for the first time since I left school to lead a normal life some time in the near future. I hope to

have the opportunity not to curse the darkness but to light the candle of human hope. I am firmly resolute in my belief in the politics of Republican Socialism. Therefore I believe it is a time for the politics of the people to take precedence over the politics of the elite.

We are now in a time of understanding, of respect, of tolerance and of healing. This is the moment for all republicans to move away from the road of conflict making on to the road of conflict resolution."

" My transfer and those of my comrades to Castlerea is an act of good faith by the authorities."



Dessie O'Hare who was transferred to Castlerea Open Prison

Belfast Memorial Committee

During 2002 Teach na Failte initiated a number of initiatives to encourage more involvement by members of the Republican Socialist Movement. A meeting was called in June and a large number of ex-prisoners attended. At that meeting it was clear that the ex-prisoners felt the need to commemorate their dead comrades.

Accordingly they agreed to establish a Memorial Committee, which would be self-financing and would work to establish wall plaques in various parts of Belfast to commemorate the Republican Socialist dead. Donations were received from many sources both in Ireland and abroad. Further more during the first six months of its existence the committee worked hard to raise funds by organising functions, raffling handicrafts from our political prisoners and other fundraising activities.

This entirely voluntary undertaking by the ex-prisoners themselves is to pay a debt to the lasting memory of the men and women who lost their lives for the cause of Irish Republican Socialism. The work has met with great success and as at the end of January 2003 three plaques have been erected.

The first plaque dedicated to the memory of Noel Little and Ronnie Bunting was unveiled on 13th October 2002 by family members in the Gransha area of Belfast.

Bernadette McAliskey spoke before a crowd of several hundred people to



Memorial plaque in memory of Ronnie Bunting & Noel Little

honour her fellow members of the H Block Committee.

On 8th December 2002 Mrs Craven did the honours at the unveiling of a plaques to her son Joe Craven in Bawnmore, Belfast.

In January in the New Barnsley area



Plaque in memory of Joe Craven

of Belfast, relatives unveiled a plaque to commemorate Mickey Kearney and Patrick Campbell.

All these events have been extremely



In memory of Mickey Kearney And Patrick Campbell

well attended and have been fitting tributes to our comrades.

At the start of this year a meeting was held in Strabane, attended by ex-prisoners from all over the six counties to plan for the coming year. A plaque to the memory of Hugh Ferguson and Hugh O'Neill will be unveiled in the Whiterock area of Belfast on 23rd February 2003.

Teach na Failte would be pleased to hear from anybody who can help in

any way. Anyone who helps with a donation will receive a laminated commemorative poster of the hunger strikers. All donations, large or small are welcome.

If you would like more information, or indeed wish to help, please contact Gerard Murray at:

Alternatively, anyone wishing to make

Gerard Murray
Teach na Failte
392 Falls Road
BELFAST

Telephone (028) 9023-8321

teachnafailte.belfast@virgin.net

a contribution please pay to:

Teach na Failte No.2 Account
Account No. 73030255
Sort Code: 98-00-20

c/o Ulster Bank
1 Antrim Road
BELFAST

New Dynamic for Teach na Failte Belfast

Since 1st November 2002 two new full-time community workers have been appointed by Teach na Failte to continue the work of developing Teach na Failte as an education, lobbying and support service for Republican Socialist prisoners and their families. The project has received funding from the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland.

The two new workers are Fra Halligan and Gerry Ruddy who both



Fra Halligan
Family Worker

have practical knowledge of the Republican Socialist Movement and its history.



Gerry Ruddy
Political Education Officer

Fra is the Family Worker and deals with the legacy of the conflict on ex-prisoners and their families. He provides advice, promotes training and counselling, encourages education opportuni-

ties and promotes skill based training to enhance the career prospects of ex-prisoners. Fra operates a daily advice centre for all who are in need of help.

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Tel: (028) 9023-8321

Victim-hood

One of the most important issues that has come up within Teach na Failte has been the issue of victim-hood. During the last number of years there has been much talk of survivors, trauma, victims and so on. There is no doubt that very many people have suffered directly or indirectly as a result of the troubles. When you consider the wide range of relatives we all have, then you can appreciate the ripple effect of pain and injury when someone is injured or killed. That pain may deaden over the years but it never goes away.

Recently Teach na Failte sent six ex-prisoners to a one day course on counselling, facilitated by Karl Tooher, in co-operation with the Conflict Trauma Resource Centre. Teach na Failte itself has a great deal of experience in advice work, including mediation and conflict resolution skills. We have dealt with the practical issues that confront ex-prisoners, the family difficulties that may have arisen and many other related issues, but we have been aware that many of our friends, supporters and comrades

have bottled up their own traumas and pain. It has been a hidden pain locked up and not brought out into the light.

We are determined to give our victims the opportunity to express their pain, deal with their trauma and then move on with their lives. To this end we are going to continue to develop our skills in the area of trauma counselling, and we also intend to give our victims the opportunity to come together and explore their own feelings and pain in a friendly and supportive atmosphere. We will be seeking to secure funding to help bring people together to do this. If you wish to participate or help out please contact us at Teach na Failte.

Glencree Centre for Reconciliation

Glencree Centre for Reconciliation offers a welcome to all traditions sharing these islands who share its aspirations in the world of peace-building.

The current programme, structure and direction of Glencree were established in 1994. Glencree people perceive peace-building as a process which provides opportunities to understand the nature and meaning of conflicts and opportunities to resolve them without recourse to violence.

Glencree offers programme approaches which reflect the belief that new ways can be found to deal with diversity and conflict in a democratic society.

Along with victims/survivors of the conflict, who face the challenge of coming to terms with their loss and suffering and who meet at Glencree

with each other and with former combatants, one realises that the achievement of a peaceful society is of interest and value to us all. Glencree recognises that reconciling centuries-old differences is a task which requires ongoing dedicated, strenuous and courageous effort as well as time and patience.



Glencree Centre for Reconciliation

Teach na Failte first became involved with Glencree 18 months ago. We have facilitated the Reports for Community and have been involved

in differing programmes.

Political workshops aimed at facilitating dialogue between and within all political parties have now after years of excluding the voice of the IRSP become inclusive.

In October 2002, Teach na Failte was represented by a number of delegates at a residential training weekend and they successfully completed *An Introduction to Conflict Management and Negotiation*.

Glencree Centre for Reconciliation
Glencree
Enniskerry
Co. Wicklow
Tel: (01) 282 9711

Training Courses

Teach na Failte will be providing a number of capacity building training courses in the very near future. The first batch of courses, which will hopefully start in March, will focus on IT training for both adults and children. There will be courses on basic IT for those with no knowledge of computers, CLAIT and ECDL, which are both accredited courses. If there is a demand for other more advanced IT courses, or for that matter other courses, which you may be interested in doing, then these too could be made available.



IT Training at
Teach na Failte

We are currently in the process of establishing an IT suite, which will suit the needs of the training courses and the clients availing of the courses.

If you require any further information on these courses, contact Teach na Failte at telephone number (028) 7188-4616.

Christmas Party for Local Children

On Friday 20th December 2002, Teach na Failte organised a Christmas party for local children at Fountain Street Community Centre, Strabane.

There were approximately 50 children in attendance and they enjoyed party crackers, sweets, crisps and lemonade. As the children eagerly anticipated the arrival of the man himself, they passed the time playing on a bouncy castle.

Suddenly the doors swung open and Santa Claus arrived with a HO! HO! HO!, although

one child was heard to comment: "Daddy, that's not Santa Claus – that's Big Paddy!"

Each child received a present from the man in red before he had to head off to Lapland to ensure everything was in readiness for Christmas Day.



New Deal

Teach na Failte was accepted as a training provider within the Strabane New Deal Consortium in June 2000. New Deal is a comprehensive preparation for employment programme to encourage long-term unemployed, ex-prisoners and lone parents back into the labour market.

Teach na Failte currently provides ten trainees. Eight are on the benefits plus option, working in areas such as painting and decorating and administration. The other two are on the employed option, working in the Teach na Failte office in Strabane. They are Zac Logue and Andy Gallagher.

Zac began his placement with Teach na Failte on 13th January 2003 and is employed as the Marketing and Research Officer. He is responsible for creating and publishing newsletters, flyers, editorials, press re-

leases, and internet research. Although Zac comes from a strong administration background, he views this placement as an opportunity to learn new skills, including desktop publishing, interview techniques and research techniques.

“Although I had no experience of desktop publishing I have managed in four short weeks, with the help and encouragement of my colleagues at Teach na Failte, to produce this newsletter” said Zac.

With confidence growing, Zac is now undertaking a Web Design course, through the Community Training Programme, at the Nerve Centre in Derry, and he hopes to create and maintain a web-site for Teach na Failte in the not so distant future. He is also due to begin a Digital Photography course in early March and is also attending a Conflict Resolution weekend in Glencree Centre for Reconciliation at the end of February.

Zac eventually hopes to gain employment within the community group sector in Strabane.

Andy has worked with Teach Na Failte, on a voluntary basis, since its conception in 1996. Although working on a voluntary basis has its rewards, personal commitments left him with little time for which to fulfil obligations to future work prospects and that of Teach Na Failte. The New Deal, employed option, changed this scenario dramatically and opened up many opportunities for Andy to avail of. He has been on this program for approximately 3 months and in this short period has taken part in courses which has given him the confidence and experience to deal with situations which he believes will be beneficial in gaining future employment in Community Development.

Since taking up his post on the New Deal program Andy has attended a two day course on Conflict Management which was facilitated by Strabane District Council. He has also attended three weekend courses on Mediation Network and Conflict Management & Negotiation which were facilitated by The Peace & Reconciliation Centre in Glencree. These courses and the fact that Andy has been able to attend many meetings on both local and national basis has given him the experience to go forward and deal with the situations which arise in community development.

“I would like to take this opportunity to thank the management and staff of Teach Na Failte and all those involved in the New Deal program for their assistance in providing me with the opportunity to enhance my aspirations towards future employment in community development” concluded Andy.

A Visit

A visit, a small taste of beauty

A touch of reality

A touch of passion

A touch of You

Smelling soft fragrances

Caressing pink skin

Brushing lips moist and sweet

Smiling, talking, happy together

For just a short while jail is a nice place to be

Because you are here

Deep sighs of sadness ‘time up now’

That’s it for another week

So many things left unsaid

The unspoken words on our tongues

Kissed away as we say slán

Pretending it doesn’t matter

We are strong, we are proud

We are happy together, we are ourselves

We were in an embrace

We shall be again

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Teach na Failte is a Registered Charity XR19159

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Staff in Profile

Paul Gallagher

Paul is relatively new to Teach na Failte, starting with us in November 2002 as Cross Border Development Worker, bringing with him a wealth of experience. Paul has always been active within the community and accepting this post is a natural progression.

Prior to this move, Paul was actively involved with Community Development for approximately ten years within the Strabane District. He has worked with Springhill Park Community Development Association and the Strabane District Community Education Forum.

He has been prominent within the Strabane District, dealing with many issues involving community development, such as capital projects – including Community Centres and play areas for local children.

He has also been involved in projects such as Environmental, Housing, Education Programmes, Community Festivals (including summer schemes), setting up groups for the unemployed, setting up Youth Groups and Womens' Groups.

Paul is currently a member of the Strabane Local

Strategy Partnership, a panel member for the Community Foundation For Northern Ireland (dealing with weak community structures) and is finally a Director for the Organisation for the Unemployed Northern Ireland based in Belfast.

Paul sees his primary role within Teach na Failte “to unify and develop the capacity for Teach na Failte to deliver and deal with the many difficult issues and problems facing ex-prisoners on the island of Ireland and linking these issues up with various Community, Statutory and Private sectors.”



Paul Gallagher

**Cross-Border
Development Worker**