

Press Release**Date** 24 June 2015**Status** For immediate release**Tackling educational underachievement with the Bushmills
Education Partnership**

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Young People and Parents from Bushmills joined representatives from the voluntary and statutory agencies, local schools and political representatives on Saturday 13th June to celebrate Education over the decades. The event opened with a short video showcasing some 'selfies' from the village and a chat with some local people about what life was like for them in Bushmills when they were young.

Bushmills Residents and Environmental Forum (BREF) started the Bushmills Education Partnership over 3 years ago with members now including parents, local primary schools, Dunluce School, the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP), EA Youth Service, Surestart, local youth groups and Corrymeela. This group is open to all representatives in the community interested in working together to improve education outcomes for local young people.

Leanne Abernethy from BREF noted that "BREF are very excited to be hosting the 3rd annual Bushmills education festival as part of the Education Partnership. The theme is 'Back to the future' which will help bring education past and present back into the community and there will bound to be some reminiscing done."

The event was compered by Liz McAlveen Dunluce School included performances from Club 8-14, Bushmills PS, Dunluce School and Straidbilly PS and Mervyn Storey was the first person to be interviewed on the sofa about his experience of education. Dalriada Rural Sure Start created a beautiful play space for children and their families exploring favourite books and characters and creating a colourful sea mosaic against the wall.

Alastair Donaghy from the Association of Teachers and Lecturers brought strategic context and experience to tackling educational underachievement and highlighted

some of the issues facing many working class Protestant communities. He congratulated the Bushmills Education Partnership on their work and approach.

Michelle Knight McQuillan, Mayor of the new Causeway Coast and Glens Council stressed the importance of continuous learning as she presented awards to Trader of the Year 2015 to SamS and Dunluce School Teacher of the Year 2015 Miss Stewart. These awards were chosen by local young people from local primary schools and Dunluce School. Michelle Maguire, EA Youth Service also used the session to present certificates to local adults who had completed trainee adult leader qualifications to allow them to volunteer in local youth programmes. Michelle Cheshire from Ballytober PS was recognised for her Approved Teacher Status for working with children with literacy difficulties and is one of only 19 teachers in NI to be awarded AMBDA status (Associated Member of the British Dyslexia Association). Finally David Loughry, retiring after 35 years of service to Dunluce and Bushmills was thanked with great emotion from all present.

Commenting on the success of the event Liz McAlveen, VP Dunluce School said: "I really enjoyed the third Bushmills Education Festival. I loved the idea of looking back to what school was like in the past and what it is like now! There were a few surprises along the way and a few faces from the past."

Selena Ramsey, CYPSP said "this is the third community education festival in Bushmills and it seems to get better each year. It is important not to forget that there is a considerable amount of work ongoing to keep education at the forefront of everyone minds by the Bushmills Education Partnership throughout the year."

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