

Press release

€56 million Shared Island cross-border funding to expand Ulster University's Derry campus

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Other projects include:

- respite and therapeutic centre for children with cancer and their families
- new Youth Forum for young people to set out vision for shared future
- two new all-island bioeconomy demonstrator facilities for the agriculture and marine sectors
- completion of Narrow Water Bridge tender process

The government has today awarded €56 million from the Shared Island Fund for significant cross-border investments including a major investment at Ulster University's campus in Derry to expand higher education on both sides of the border.

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, Tánaiste Micheál Martin, Minister for Further & Higher Education Simon Harris and Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth Roderic O'Gorman confirmed funding for several projects including €44.5 million to build a new teaching and student services building at Ulster University's Derry campus.

A new Youth Forum will also be set up as part of the Shared Island initiative, bringing together up to 80 young people from North and South across all communities from September to set out their vision and values for a shared future on the island.

Funding was also announced for:

- construction of two new all-island bioeconomy demonstrator facilities for the agriculture and marine sectors (€7 million)
- a new respite and therapeutic centre for children diagnosed with cancer and their families from across the island of Ireland (€2.5 million)
- completion this year of the tender process for the Narrow Water Bridge project (€2 million)

This investment at Ulster University in Derry will underpin teaching and research cooperation between Ulster University and Atlantic Technological University-Donegal. It will also allow the four North West Tertiary Education Cluster institutions to work more closely together in providing further and higher education in the region.

Making today's announcements, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar said:

"This investment in Ulster University marks a step-change in higher education in the North West. It will help to transform education in the region, and in the medium term will foster new jobs and economic growth. The new teaching and student services building will help to grow student numbers and enhance higher education. It also fulfils our commitment under the New Decade, New Approach (NDNA) agreement to invest in the Derry campus. I am also excited about the new Youth Forum which starts in September as part of the Shared Island initiative. This aims to harness the experience for young people of growing up in an era of peace, with the goal of helping them relate to and understand each other unburdened by divisions of the past. We hope their vision and values for how we share this island across all communities will inspire us all.

"The government is keen to work with a new Executive, once formed, and with the UK Government to fund other investments that will benefit the North West and border regions, and the island as a whole."

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Micheál Martin, said:

“The investment decisions made today under the Shared Island Initiative will further deepen the people to people links across this island, including in such important areas as health and education – things which impact so much on the day to day lives of us all.

“The Shared Island Initiative is forward looking and optimistic for the future of this island. I am ambitious for the island and for the Initiative, and look forward to continued investment in building a connected, prosperous and sustainable island, a great place for all the communities who call it home.”

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris, said:

“The announcement today is not just about capital investment in the University of Ulster’s campus, but a signal of our commitment to all-island education.

“We have made incredible progress with colleagues in Northern Ireland to deliver medical and nursing education on an all-island basis.

“Today is a major step forward. This is something long sought after but today we are reporting invaluable progress under New Decade, New Approach.”

Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O’Gorman, said:

"The government's Shared Island Fund is delivering on our all-island investment objectives, including to develop the bioeconomy - a key climate action area, North and South.

"As Minister with responsibility for Youth affairs and participation, I am looking forward to the commencement of the new Shared Island Youth Forum in September, which provides a space for young people to consider their vision and values for our shared future on this island."

Professor Paul Bartholomew, Vice-Chancellor of Ulster University said:

"We are delighted to receive confirmation of this investment by the Irish Government. The funding announced will make a very significant contribution in preparing the campus for significant growth and is part of a larger investment package that comprises our own investment, City Deal funding, Inclusive Futures funding, and Department for the Economy capital grant monies. With our partners, we have an ambitious vision to continue to expand student numbers on our Derry campus and to grow our economic and social impact in the whole of the northwest of the island."

This announcement delivers on the government's commitment under the New Decade New Approach agreement to capital investment at the campus to support expanded higher education provision in the North West. Each project will be developed in cooperation with Northern Irish counterparts. The government has now allocated a total of €247 million from the Shared Island Fund since 2020.

Notes

Ulster University - new teaching and student services building in Derry - €44.5 million:

Outer Shared Island Ferry Water Bridge tender stage - €2 million

- up to €44.5 million will be provided from the Shared Island Fund to implement the government's commitment under the New Decade, New Approach agreement to capital investment at Ulster University campus in Derry, for construction of a new teaching and student services building to expand student provision in the North West
 - this project will be progressed by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and his department working with Ulster University and in continuing consultation with the Department for Economy in Northern Ireland
 - the new teaching building is part of Ulster University's development plan to provide a campus that can increase student numbers in Derry to 6,500 and beyond
 - the new teaching building in Derry will provide additional lecture and seminar spaces, computer labs and on-campus student services. It will also free up space in other buildings on campus for teaching and research activity
 - the government will provide 85% of the estimated cost of construction, with Ulster University to cover the balance and any additional costs
 - capital investment at Ulster University's campus in Derry is also supported by the Executive and UK Government, including through the Derry City Deal
 - the project has a strong cross-border dimension, directly supporting the significant and expanding joint undergraduate and postgraduate course provision and research collaboration by Atlantic Technological University (Donegal) and Ulster University
 - further development work will also be undertaken by the North West Tertiary Education Cluster (NWTEC) on innovative pathways to further and higher education in the region on a cross-border basis. The NWTEC is composed of ATU (Donegal) and Donegal Education and Training Board, with Ulster University in Derry and North-West Regional College in Northern Ireland
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- a new Youth Forum is being organised by the Department of the Taoiseach in partnership with the National Youth Council of Ireland, as part of the Shared Island initiative. The Forum will comprise up to 80 young people, aged 18-25 from across all communities, meeting 6 to 8 times over a 12-month period at locations across the island. The first meeting will be on 8 September in Dublin Castle
 - forum meetings will focus on themes of common interest shaped by the members. It is envisaged that the Forum will produce an outcome document to inform and inspire broader discussions on a shared future for all communities on the island of Ireland

- nominations to the Forum are currently being sought by the department from youth, civic and community organisations, in cooperation with the National Youth Council of Ireland and partners in Northern Ireland

All-island bioeconomy demonstrators - €7 million

- €7 million Shared Island Fund allocation to the total cost for construction of two bioeconomy demonstrator facilities to support integration of bio-based innovation in the agriculture and marine sectors across the island. A facility will operate in each jurisdiction and at least 50% of Shared Island resourcing will be for project delivery in Northern Ireland
- the Department for Agriculture, Food and Marine is bringing together the overall funding package for the project, which will be progressed through a competitive funding call later this year, run in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland

Respite therapeutic centre for children diagnosed with cancer and their families - €2.5 million

- €2.5 million Shared Island Fund allocation to the funding for a new respite and therapeutic centre for children diagnosed with cancer and their families from across the island
 - the Minister and Department for Health are bringing together an overall funding package, which will be announced with further information on the project
 - the project is aligned with the National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026 and will complement and add to existing North/South cooperation on cancer care
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- the government in November 2022 decided to proceed with a tender process for the Narrow Water Bridge project, which was commenced by Louth County Council in April and is due to conclude in October. €2 million has been allocated from the Shared Island

Fund for the cost of completing the tender stage. The project is overseen by the Department for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, working with Louth County Council and in consultation with the Department for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland

Further information on the Shared Island Initiative is available at [www.gov.ie/sharedisland.](https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/c3417-shared-island/) (<https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/c3417-shared-island/>).

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