

a Good Relations
project

The Shared History Outreach Project

2023/24



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This project was created to
engage our communities with
different heritages and cultures
in our city.

Participants visit the Museum of Free Derry and The Siege
Museum to learn to respect difference.

Introduction

The Shared History Outreach Project was developed as a partnership between the Museum of Free Derry, the Siege Museum and Urban Villages. It encouraged participants to explore the history of Derry in a welcoming and open environment. Over the four years of the project, we have facilitated greater mutual understanding and respect between the two traditional communities locally, and others, through discussion of differing perspectives of history between members of these communities.

The constructive partnership built between the museums is testament to how groups from both sides of a divided society can work together without any dilution of each other's identity or importance.

The project included a visit to both the Museum of Free Derry and the Siege Museum, which between them cover two of the most important periods in the history of Derry – the siege of the city in 1689 and the civil rights / early conflict era of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Both of these periods are highly significant locally, nationally and internationally.

The Siege Museum is a purpose-built visitor centre dedicated to the history of the Siege of Londonderry 1689 and the modern-day role played by The Associated Clubs of the Apprentice Boys of Derry. The museum features artefacts, video and interactive media and is located adjacent to the Apprentice Boys Memorial Hall, Society Street, Londonderry.



The Museum of Free Derry, the signature project of the Bloody Sunday Trust, tells the story of how a largely working-class community rose up against the years of oppression it had endured, of how the peaceful civil rights movement was met with violence, and the descent into conflict which led to Bloody Sunday. The museum is a space where the concept of Free Derry can be explored in both historic and contemporary context through audio, video and interactive displays alongside artefacts.

Both museums encourage discussion and questions with informed guides. These discussions can include how parading, which continues to be a contentious issue, has been largely addressed locally, and in the case of Bloody Sunday, how truth and justice is not only liberating for those directly affected but also the wider community.

The Shared History Outreach Project was aimed at facilitating participants of all ages and from all backgrounds to engage with and discuss the shared history of Derry. This year we were delighted to welcome 640 participants, our largest year so far. Over the four years of the project, we have been able to welcome over a thousand participants, building year on year after the decreased uptake due to COVID restrictions in the early years of the project.

The Executive Office sponsored Urban Villages Initiative has been our funder for the Shared History Outreach Project throughout its four-year run. The initiative is designed to improve good relations and develop thriving communities where there has been a history of deprivation and community tension, such as Colin (West Belfast), EastSide (East Belfast), Ardoyne & Greater Ballysillan (North Belfast), Sandy Row, Donegall Pass & the Markets (South Belfast) and The Bogside, Fountain and Bishop Street (Derry/Londonderry). Urban Villages has also developed the Bogside and Fountain area through the redevelopment of Meenan Square and the Public Realms project and funded the Peacemakers Museum in the Gasyard and New Gate Arts and Culture Centre in the Fountain.



From June 2023 to March 2024, we invited over 600 participants from accross NI to take part in the The Shared History Outreach Project. This involved visiting the Museum of Free Derry and the Siege Museum to learn about remembering the past, respecting different cultures and heritages, and the rich history of the city of Derry.





**What did you
think of your visit
to the Museum
of Free Derry
and the Siege
Museum?**



ALLS OF LONDONDERRY

people held the walled city of Londonderry in the face of the Catholic King James II, until the relief fleet...
the River Foyle on July 28 and the Jacobite forces commenced their retreat...



'I think the Museum of Free Derry was very interesting as it had the actual clothes the people [victims] on Bloody Sunday wore. And the Siege [Museum] videos were interesting...'

Participant – Thornhill College, Derry



'Personally, I've got to learn and understand more about Ireland / Irish History as an immigrant.'

Participant – St Patrick's College, Dungannon



'It was done with much sensitivity, all perspectives were taken into consideration, whilst still expressing opinions and beliefs.'

Participant – Thornhill College, Derry



'An absolutely brilliant experience for both myself as class teacher and the pupils.'

Participant – St Patrick's College, Dungannon



'Fantastic, very informative and an important part of our shared history was discussed.'

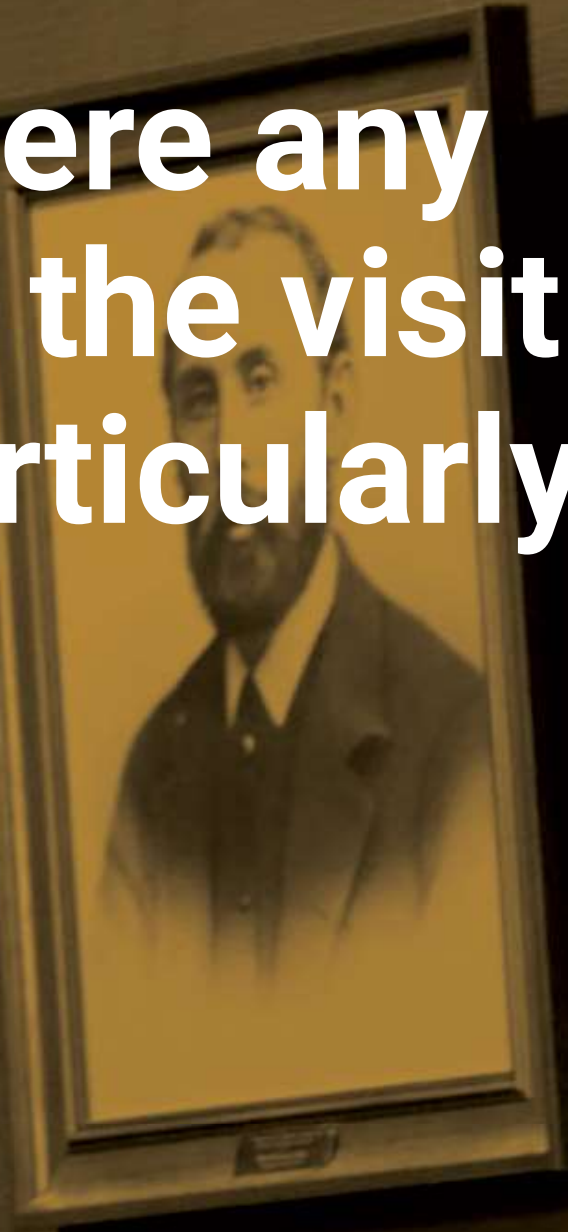
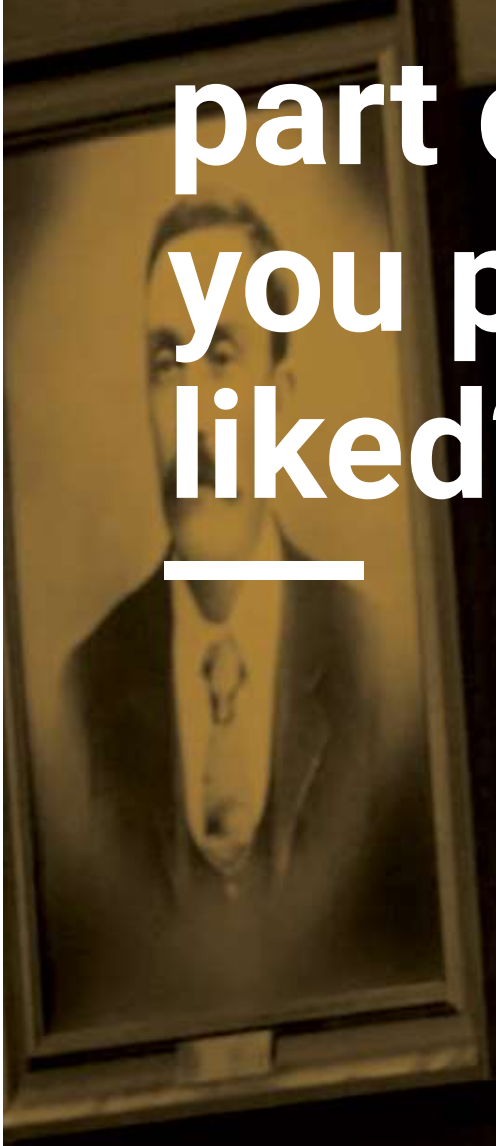
Participant – Thornhill College, Derry



'The Siege Museum was good and very interactive.'

Participant – St Ciaran's College, Ballygawley

**Was there any
part of the visit
you particularly
liked?**







'I liked learning about different cultures and backgrounds. I also liked learning about Bloody Sunday, giving me a better understanding of Irish history.'

Participant – Holy Cross College and Strabane Academy



'Both visits were informative and balanced.'

Participant – Ards and North Down Council



'John Kelly sharing his personal perspective, gave deeper understanding and increased [the] reality of [the] situation.'

Participant – Thornhill College, Derry



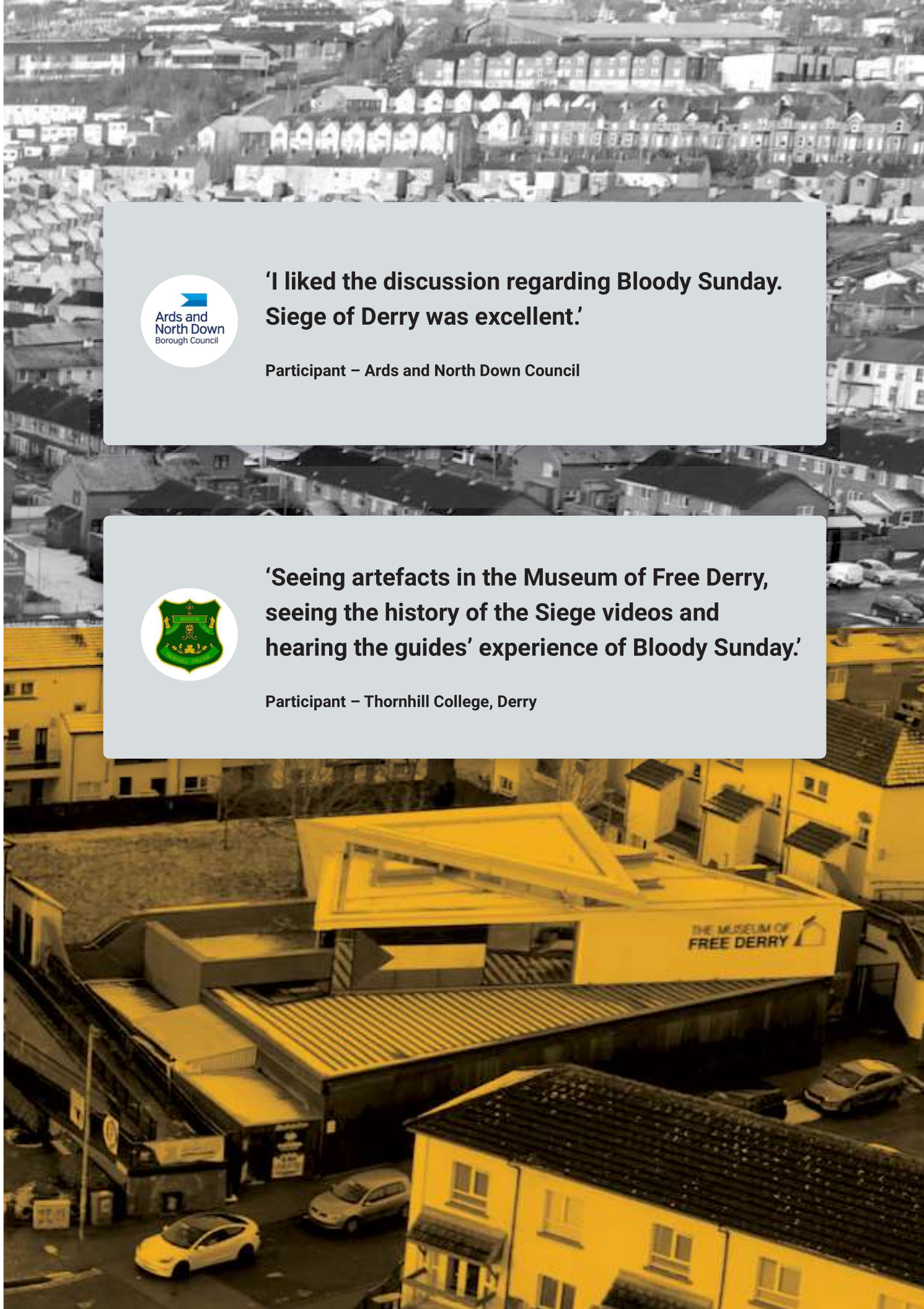
**'I liked the discussion regarding Bloody Sunday.
Siege of Derry was excellent.'**

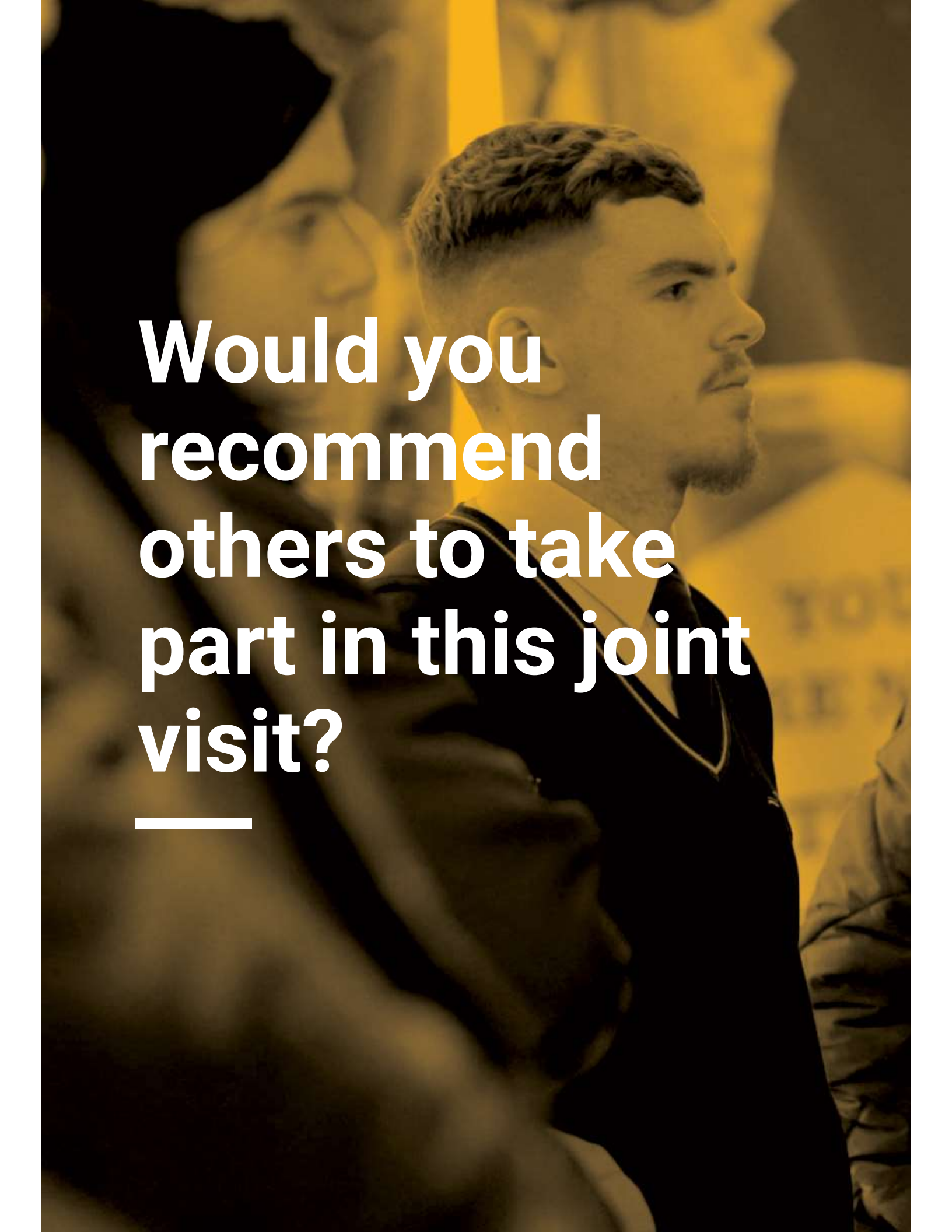
Participant – Ards and North Down Council



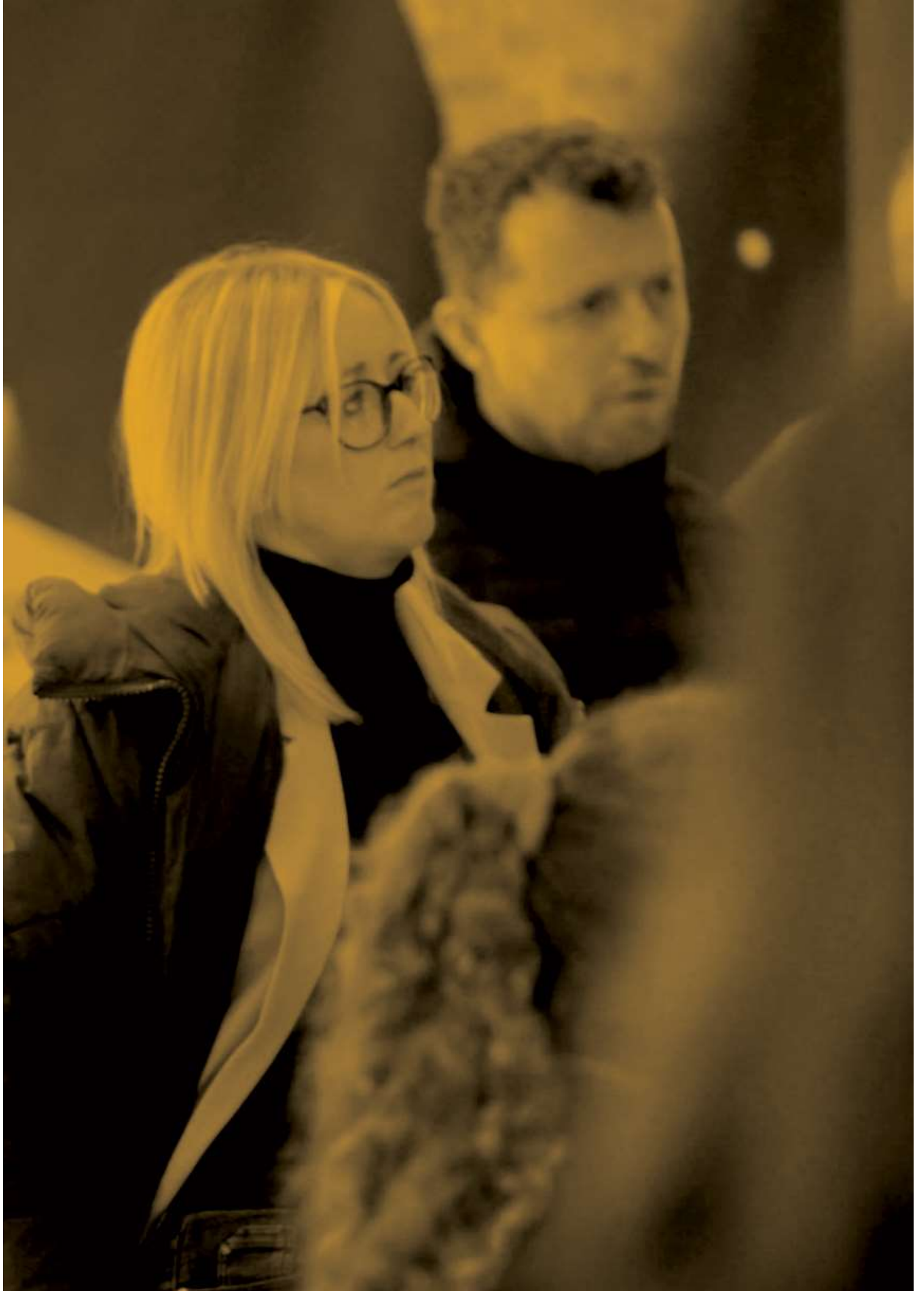
**'Seeing artefacts in the Museum of Free Derry,
seeing the history of the Siege videos and
hearing the guides' experience of Bloody Sunday.'**

Participant – Thornhill College, Derry





**Would you
recommend
others to take
part in this joint
visit?**





'Yes, 100%. It's a fun way to learn Irish history.'

Participant – St Patrick's College, Dungannon



'Yes, they could really benefit from it.'

Participant – Holy Cross College and Strabane Academy



'Definitely, how can our society even attempt to 'move on' without gaining insight into other experiences?'

Participant – Ards and North Down Council



'We should go on these trips more often, please.'

Participant – Holy Cross College and Strabane Academy

project gallery



top

Jim Brownlee speaking to a group of students from Holy Cross College and Strabane Academy in the Siege Museum.

right

A group of young people from the Bogside & Brandywell Health Forum in the Museum of Free Derry.





top

A group of students from St Columb's College in discussion with John Kelly about Bloody Sunday.

bottom

A group from Ards and North Down Council talking with Billy Moore, of the Apprentice Boys of Derry, about the City Walls.



top left

John Kelly speaking to a group from Community Fringe, Ballycastle about Bloody Sunday.



bottom left

Students from Our Lady's College, Newry receiving a guided tour of the Siege Museum.



top

Jean Hegarty, Bloody Sunday family member, speaking to a group of students from Holy Cross College and Strabane Academy.

bottom left

A group of students from St Columb's College discussing the City Walls in the Siege Museum with Stuart Moore.

bottom right

Students from St Columb's College viewing artefacts from the Battle of the Bogside in the Museum of Free Derry.



top left

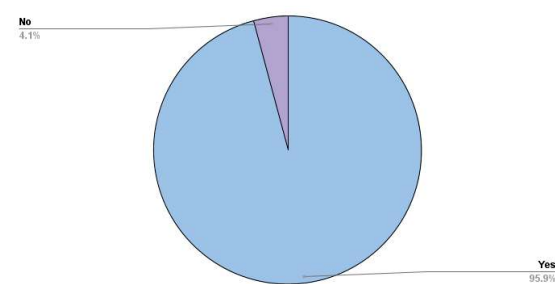
A group of students from Thornhill College in discussion about the City Walls with Stuart Moore.



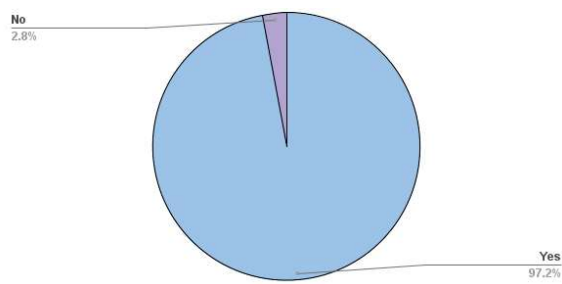
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A group of students from Holy Cross College and Strabane Academy exploring the Museum of Free Derry.

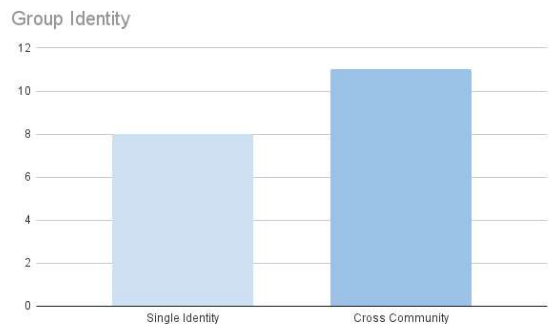
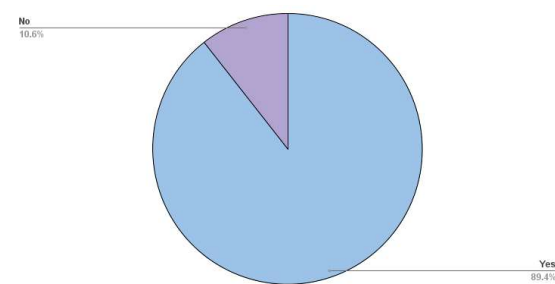
After your participation in the Shared History Outreach Project, do you feel that you have benifitted from your visit?



Having visited both museums do you feel you have an increased understanding of local culture and heritage?



After having visited both museums, do you feel that you have increased respect, mutual understanding and acceptance of other backgrounds?



At the end of each visit, we asked participants to fill out a short anonymous questionnaire recording their experience taking part in the project. This data is collected to demonstrate the positive impact on communities and also ensure that issues are addressed. We have received overwhelmingly positive responses through these questionnaires, suggesting a positive impact on the wider community. These graphs are a reflection of the feedback we have received in the last year.

The participants joined us through nineteen groups from across the North, including community groups and schools.

Of these nineteen groups, eleven were from cross-community backgrounds. This was around 60% of the total participants, made even more worthwhile because several groups were able to engage in joint visits and take part in shared discussions on our history.





Museum of Free Derry

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Derry, BT48 9DR

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The Siege Museum

13 Society Street
Londonderry, BT48 6PJ

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Email: info@thesiegemuseum.org

THE MUSEUM OF
FREE DERRY



**The
siege**
museum