



NW Anti Racism Charter: 'Sending a clear message that our city and district is a welcome place for everyone' - Mayor

Catherine McGinty
catherinemcginty16@gmail.com

"We at Gráft are very proud to have signed up to the North West Anti Racism Charter and have it displayed in our coffee shop."

"We believe very strongly our space should and always will be a safe, welcoming, and inclusive space for all.

"There is no room for racism in our community. We are very focused and aim to add to our community as best as we can, which includes making sure it is inclusive and safe to those who share it."

This is the inspiring testimony of Gráft Speciality Coffee in Rosemount regarding the North West Anti-Racism Charter.

The Charter is described as a "statement of intent, providing a way for businesses, organisations, community groups, schools, and individuals to push back against the rise of racist

messaging and actions" locally.

It pledges supporters - currently 30 businesses, community organisations, schools, collective organisations, trade unions, religious organisations, and statutory bodies and rising - to "... oppose all harm by words and actions on the basis of difference of race and colour ... live together, love together, struggle together, thrive together ... hold ourselves and others to account for racist words and actions ... commit to policies and practices that oppose division by race and colour ... promote these attitudes throughout our region in the north west of Ireland ... say no to racism."

Authored by Derry Oscar nominee and playwright, Dave Duggan, the Charter was developed through a series of meetings and community consultation workshops.

This process was facilitated by the Bloody Sunday Trust, the North

West Migrants Forum and the Irish Network Against Racism.

According to Maeve McLaughlin, the director of the Bloody Sunday Trust, the need for the Charter was recognised with "the rise of right-wing groups across this island".

"It is getting more and more important that we stand against them, united and publicly, to remind them that the vast majority of people in Ireland reject their racist message and stand with the new communities that we welcome to our country," said Ms McLaughlin.

"The North West Anti Racism Charter gives everyone an easy way to show where they stand on this serious issue, and we urge more community groups, businesses and statutory agencies across the North West to get a copy and put it on display."

The Charter was formally launched by Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District



The Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council, Ruairi McHugh pictured with the P1 class at Model Primary School last week. Included at back, from left are Ms. Corinna Wilson, LSA, Ms. Shauna Marie Gallen, teacher, Mrs. Julie McCarter, Principal, Ms. Daisy Mules, chair, board of governors and Ms. Grace Canning, LSA. (PHOTOS: JIM MCCAFFERTY PHOTOGRAPHY)

Council Ruairi McHugh in Derry's Guildhall. The launch coincided with the anniversary of Derry's historic October 5, 1968 Civil Rights March and Black History Month.

The First Citizen said the Charter was a "powerful statement from the local community that we reject racism, xenophobia, and hate in all its forms".

"The people of Derry and Strabane have a long and proud history of standing together against division," said Cllr McHugh, "and this Charter is a continuation of that legacy."

"By endorsing it, we are sending a clear message that our city and district is a welcome place for everyone."

"It is a testament to the strength and unity of our community when organisations, schools, and individuals come together to take a firm stand against intolerance," said Cllr McHugh.

During that event, Conor Sharkey, the communications officer of the North West Migrants Forum said organisations who adopted the Charter were "sending out the message that hate speech, and divisive actions are not welcome and will not be tolerated in their school, office, home, business, community hall, place of worship or wherever you choose to display it".

He added: "Amidst the

misinformation and disinformation epidemic we currently find ourselves in, it is more important than ever that we send out a strong message that we as a city, district and region, stand firmly against racism, Islamophobia, xenophobia and hate."

Shane O'Curry, the director of the Irish Network Against Racism described it as a "privilege" to be working with such a wide cross-section of groups from across the North West.

"All have expressed a strong desire to reject the politics of fear, suspicion, division and hate," said Mr O'Curry.

He added: "People in the North West know only too well where the politics of division and hate lead to, and the leadership shown by people from all backgrounds in bringing people together to write a common statement is heartening and inspiring."

Prior to its official launch, a formidable statement of intent was made in May in relation to the Charter when then Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council Lilian Seenoi-Barr and Donegal County councillor Terry Crossan, then Leas Cathaoirleach of the Inishowen Municipal District, jointly endorsed it at an event in Bridgend.

One of the early advocates of the North West Anti Racism Charter was the

Strathfoyle-based Enagh Youth Forum.

Speaking to The Derry News, youth and community worker with the Forum, Paul Hughes said his organisation had adopted the Charter as it "aligned perfectly" its ethos.

Headed: "Enagh is led by young people, for young people and is about empowering them to be the change they want to see."

"Within our membership we have members of the migrant community and for them to see the Charter on display, sends a strong message and lets them know that we have their backs."

"It also tells the local community who we are - a young person-led group that rejects racism in all of its forms," said Paul Hughes.

Emily O'Brien from local bike charity Life Cycles concurred.

She told The Derry News: "We are proud to display the North West Anti-Racism Charter in our workshop and adopt its ethos in everything we do."

Based in Creggan's Ráth Mór Centre, Repair and Share Foyle, is home of Repair Café Foyle and the city's first tool

and equipment library - the Library of Things Foyle.

Caroline McGuinness from the group explained it had adopted the North West Anti-Racism Charter as it "aligns perfectly with the ethos of our organisation".

"Repair and Share Foyle is



North West Anti Racism Charter presented to Dove House.





Mayor Ruairi McHugh at the launch of the Bloody Sunday Trust - NW Anti-Racism Charter held in the Guildhall. From left, are Constance Lambert (BST), Sumyrah Khan Maeve McLaughlin (BST), Conor Sharkey (NW Migrants Forum), Shane O Curry, Beverley Simpson, Fahmeda Naheed, Anu Mario, and Emaan Naheed. (Photo - Tom Heaney, nwprespics)

volunteer-led and among our volunteers are members of the migrant community," said Ms McGuinness.

"The migrant community come with diverse skills and are ready to share their time freely. For them to see the Charter on display, it lets them know they are welcome and they are valued.

"And it lets the wider community know what we stand for – we stand for unity and diversity and we firmly reject racism," she added.

Copies of the North West Anti-Racism Charter are available in English and Irish from the Bloody Sunday Trust and the North West Migrants Forum.

Dave Duggan encouraged: "Hang the Charter in your hall or in other places of business or leisure.

"It will aid conversation, affirm goodness and make people feel welcome

"It heartens people and that can only be good in these challenging times."



Conor Sharkey from NWMF presenting the NW Anti Racism Charter to Life Cycles



Fahmeda Naheed in Derry's Bogside with the NWARC.



Pi Derry is at Clipper Quay Street Food Market receiving the North West Anti Racism Charter



Conal McFeely of the Rath Mor Centre receiving one of the first copies of the North West Anti-Racism Charter from Conor Sharkey of the North West Migrants Forum.

