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YOUR VOICE, YOUR COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY CONFERENCE 2025



**WEDNESDAY
5 NOVEMBER 2025**

9:15-9:45am	Registration	11:50am	Supporting Communities, Colm McDaid, Chief Executive
9:55am	Round up the room by Lisa Flavelle, Radio Host	12:00pm	Inspirational Speaker two – Paul McVeigh, Author
10:00am	Welcome, Linda Watson, Chair, Central Housing Forum	12:30pm	Remarks, from the chair Nicole Lappin, Housing Executive
10:07am	A message from Communities Minister, Gordon Lyons	12:40pm	Video five South Region – Longstone Residents Association
10:10am	Video one Belfast Region – Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group	12:50pm	Video Six South Region - Granaghan & District Women’s Group
10:20am	Video two Belfast Region – Ardoyne Association	1:00 pm	Live Here Love Here, Eric Randall, Director, Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful
10:30am	Inspirational Speaker One – Gerry McConville, Director, Falls Community Council	1:10pm	Interactive Exercise
11:00am	Grainia Long, Chief Executive, Housing Executive	1:20pm	Closing remarks, Linda Watson & Entertainment – Newry Indian Arts Club
11:15am	Comfort Break	1:30pm	Networking Lunch
11:30am	Video three North Region – Galliagh Community Centre		
11:40am	Video four North Region – Glenravel and District Community and Residents Association		



GRAINIA LONG
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
HOUSING EXECUTIVE

Grainia Long is the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the strategic housing authority for Northern Ireland and one of the largest publicly owned social landlords in Europe.

Previously, Grainia was the Commissioner for Resilience for the city of Belfast, and co-Chaired the Belfast Climate Commission.

Grainia was also the Chief Executive of the National Child Protection Charity in the Republic of Ireland, ISPC Childline. This position followed several years working in housing, including as Chief Executive of the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), and previously National Director of the CIH in Northern Ireland.

She has served two terms as a member of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, was a member of the Lyons Commission on Housing Supply and Advisor to the Best Commission on the Future of Housing in Northern Ireland.

With extensive experience as a Non-Executive Director, she spent six years as Senior Independent Director at Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing Trust, a social housing provider in England.

Grainia is currently a Board Member of the CEF (Chief Executive's Forum) and is Chair of Business in the Community Northern Ireland (BITICNI) Environmental Leadership Team.



NICOLE LAPPIN
CHAIR
HOUSING EXECUTIVE

Nicole qualified as a Barrister from King's Inns Dublin and practised in both Dublin and Belfast for five years. In 2015, she was an inaugural Board Member of the Education Authority. She served as an Independent Board Member of the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service from 2017 to 2023 and chaired its Audit and Risk committee. Also in 2017, she was appointed as a non-Executive Director of the Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority in Dublin where she also chaired its Audit committee.

In 2018, she was appointed Chair of the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, and, in 2019, she was appointed Chief Commissioner of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. In 2025 she was appointed Chair of the Independent Monitoring Authority for the Citizens' Rights Agreements and is also a non-Executive Board Member of the Human Tissue Authority. From 2021-2024, Nicole was Chair of the Public Sector Chairs Forum, where she worked alongside colleagues across the public sector.

In addition to leading Boards, Nicole delivers governance training and works in a range of sectors. She has chaired a Fitness to Practise Committee for the Pharmaceutical Society NI. She delivers communication training to meet a variety of needs and provides both mentoring and coaching services. Having served as a School Governor for over fifteen years, Nicole is delighted to be working in corporate governance, overseeing the delivery of public services in important areas such as housing, health, rights, education, justice, financial and charity regulation.



GORDON LYONS
MINISTER FOR
COMMUNITIES

In February 2024 Gordon Lyons MLA was appointed as the Minister for Communities. His remit is wide ranging and covers housing, regeneration, sports, arts, culture, languages, libraries, museums, historic environment, benefits and pensions, community and voluntary sector, residential building safety, child maintenance services, tackling disadvantage and promoting equality of opportunity.

Gordon served as a Councillor on Mid and East Antrim Council from May 2014 to August 2015 when he was appointed as MLA for East Antrim and subsequently re-elected in 2016, 2017 and 2022.

In January 2020, Gordon was appointed to the Executive as a Junior Minister. He acted as Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for a short period and was appointed Minister for the Department of Economy from



LINDA WATSON B.E.M.
CHAIR OF CENTRAL
HOUSING FORUM

Linda is the Centre Manager of Caw/Nelson Drive Action Group which is a community group situated in the Waterside area of Derry/Londonderry.

Linda is a member on many boards and forums both locally and regionally including vice-chairperson of the Waterside Neighbourhood Partnership, board member of Apex Housing Association, member of the Housing Policy Panel, a board of governor of Lisneal College and is currently vice-chairperson of the Derry & Strabane PCSP.

As a Housing Executive Tenant and representing the West Area, Linda is currently the Chairperson of the Housing Executive's Central Housing Forum and in May 2022 was selected to become an independent member of their Tenant & Customer Services Committee.



LISA FLAVELLE
DIRECTOR OF
BELFAST 89 FM

Lisa Flavelle grew up surrounded by music and the world of broadcasting. When Belfast Community Radio (BCR) launched in the early 1990s, Lisa became one of its young voices. Her radio journey has taken her across many of Northern Ireland's most loved stations, including CityBeat, Downtown Radio, Cool FM, and U105, where she established herself as a versatile and trusted broadcaster with a deep understanding of what makes local radio thrive. Never one to stand still, she has also taken on a freelance presenter role having recently presented her first series on BBC Sounds.

In recent years, Lisa has channeled her experience into community broadcasting as one of the founding Directors of Belfast 89 FM. The station, which celebrates classic hits and local culture, reflects Lisa's commitment to the heart of Belfast and to accessible, listener-driven radio. She shares her professional expertise as an Associate Lecturer at Belfast Metropolitan College, where she teaches radio production and presentation skills. Known for her meticulous approach and infectious enthusiasm, she has been described by colleagues as a perfectionist with a true passion for the craft of broadcasting.

Lisa remains community-focused and continues to be one of Belfast's most respected and enduring voices — a true champion of community and local radio.



GERRY MCCONVILLE
FALLS COMMUNITY COUNCIL
DIRECTOR

Gerry McConville is the Director of Falls Community Council (FCC), an umbrella group for community development organisations in West Belfast. FCC is involved in the political, social and economic regeneration of the area and also works in the field of human rights, social justice and participative democracy. FCC contributes to strategic initiatives throughout west Belfast and across the city aimed at eliminating inequality and reducing disadvantages whilst promoting prosperity and peace building.

He has worked with the organisation for 31 years, formerly as Manager of the Community Drug Programme. Gerry has worked within the community sector of West Belfast for over 40 years. Gerry is involved with many cross-community conflict resolution initiatives and was a founding member of the Steering Group of Belfast Conflict Resolution Consortium and is currently working on conflict related cross-community initiatives along the south/west Belfast interfaces.

Gerry is a member of the West Belfast Partnership Board and sits on its Finance, Audit and Risk committee. He is also a Director of Techdesk, a local IT Social Enterprise. FCC have recently completed the £7.2m refurbishment of St Comgalls School which has quickly become a hub of peacebuilding activity. Phase 2 of St Comgalls is almost complete which is a visitor exhibition which will tell the political, social, economic and cultural story of the Falls area. This 3900k project will open in Autumn 2025.



PAUL MCVEIGH
AUTHOR

Paul's debut novel, The Good Son, won The Polari First Book Prize and The McCrea Literary Award, and was shortlisted for many others including The Prix du Roman Cezam. The book about a young working-class boy from North Belfast during the Troubles was an international hit and is currently being turned into a play. Paul's own play, Big Man, premiered at The Lyric Theatre and won an Irish Times Irish Theatre Award in 2023.

Paul's short stories have been featured on BBC Radio, RTE Radio, as well as being televised on Sky ARTS.

His debut collection of short stories, I Hear You, was published in March 2025. Paul has edited three anthologies; with stories about Belfast, LGBT and working-class voices. His writing has been translated into eight languages.



ERIC RANDALL
KEEP NORTHERN IRELAND
BEAUTIFUL
DIRECTOR

Eric Randall is the Chief Executive of Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, taking up the post in November 2024. He has more than three decades of experience in the sector. In his previous roles, he has worked on projects that have involved bringing a diverse range of stakeholders together to achieve positive outcomes for our environment. Since joining KNIB, he has been leading the organisation in developing a new strategic plan for the next five years.



COLM MCDAID
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

Since joining Supporting Communities in 1994, Colm has been a catalyst for transformation. His journey within the organisation culminated in his appointment as Chief Executive in 2014. Since then, he has been leading the organisation and driving it forward through developing a new governance model, renewed staffing structure, revised strategic and business plans, and launching a new trading subsidiary in 2017. Colm is also a board member of the Chartered Institute of Housing.