

## **SPEAKERS' BIOGRAPHIES**

### **Trevor Neilands**

Trevor spent over 30 years in further education including 10 years as a College Principal. He was Principal of Northern Regional College at the time of his retirement in 2014. He was one of the founders of OCNNI and served as Chair for the first ten years of its existence. He was also a member of the board of EGSA.

Since his retirement Trevor has continued his career as a lifelong learner with Stranmillis, Queen's and the University of the Third Age.

Trevor is currently Chair of the N.I. Impact Forum for Adult Learning.

### **Stephen Evans**

Stephen Evans became Chief Executive in 2016 after two years as Deputy Chief Executive, where he was responsible for Learning and Work Institutes research and development work. He joined from Working Links, a leading provider for employment and skills services, where he led on policy, strategy and business development. Prior to this, he worked for the London Development Agency as Director of Employment and Skills, commissioning programmes and leading the work of the London Skills and Employment Board; was Chief Economist at the Social Market Foundation; and spent six years as Senior Policy Advisor in HM Treasury, leading on policy to cut child poverty, increase employment and boost productivity. Since joining, Stephen has helped develop the organisation's new strategic plan and further extend its reach and impact. At the London Development Agency he introduced a new approach to commissioning programmes that led to more people finding work and improved value for money by more than one third. At the Treasury, he developed a number of policy packages across learning, skills and employment, and led work on the independent Leitch Review of Skills.

### **Kim Walsh**

Kim is a Community Planning Officer with Belfast City Council and has been part of the team that has developed the Belfast Agenda, Belfast's first community plan. She previously managed community regeneration and EU funded adult learning programmes in south Wales prior to moving to Northern Ireland in 2011 to take up the position of project lead for the BIG Lottery Funded Community Planning project in Belfast.

### **Alison Keenan**

Alison Keenan is the Community Planning Manager for Antrim and Newtownabbey, a role she has held for almost three years. Before moving into community planning she managed the Peace III programme in Carrickfergus, Antrim and Newtownabbey for 5 years and the Core Funding Programme for the Community Relations Council for 6 years



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prior to that. Over the years her work has brought her into contact with groups, organisations and individuals across sectors and across Northern Ireland.

### **Our Learners**

Martina Rahman is from Drumbeg estate, Craigavon and is married with 4 children. She is currently a 2nd year student on the part-time BSc Hons Community Development and volunteers in her local community centre.

AJ Conlon (Anne Jane) has a diagnosis of depression and low mood, experiencing mental ill health from a young age after the death of her mother. AJ worked for a large supermarket chain and while in this role she suffered an injury and was off ill for a number of months. AJ returned to work in her father's concrete floor laying business. She became very skilled at this and within a year she had her own van on the road winning her own contracts. However AJ was aware that she was unwell as she was still experiencing episodes of depression and low mood, as well as experiencing further back pain. AJ commenced Action Mental Health (AMH) New Horizons Antrim in March 2016. Since then she has completed OCN Employability Levels 1 & 2, EDCL Levels 1 & 2 and is currently registered for NVQ Level 2 Health and Social Care, undertaking a training placement to support the completion of this award.

### **Political Panel Members**

#### **Caoimhe Archibald**

Caoimhe grew up in Coleraine and was educated at Loreto College and Queen's University, Belfast. She qualified with a BSc in Molecular Biology and PhD by research sponsored by a DARD studentship. She also completed a PGDip in Management & Corporate Governance from the University of Ulster.

She worked in applied horticulture research and believes very strongly in the importance of investment in R&D and SMEs to enable local businesses to compete in a global market. Caoimhe was first elected to the Assembly in 2016 and returned in 2017. She is party spokesperson for Further & Higher Education.

#### **Roy Beggs**

Roy is an MLA for East Antrim. Roy is also a member of the Justice Committee and the NI Assembly Business Trust. He currently chairs the APG for the Community & Voluntary Sector and is active in a number of community & voluntary groups within East Antrim.

A QUB graduate, Roy worked as a production and technical manager for manufacturing companies, before entering the Assembly in 1998. He also served as a Local Councillor for 10 years.

## Pat Catney

Pat was elected as an MLA for the Lagan Valley constituency in March 2017, with cross-community support. Previously Pat was elected to Lisburn City Council in 2011 and re-elected in 2014.

Before being elected to the Assembly Pat was a retired businessman who worked in the hospitality sector since he was 16. Living in Lisburn, Pat ran some of Belfast's most successful bars during the troubles, entertaining customers from all walks of life, including diplomats and negotiators during the peace process.

