

AINA CASE STUDY

PLACE MAKING AND SHAPING

The Peace Bridge, Derry, Northern Ireland



The eye catching Peace bridge on its official opening day in June 2011

New footbridge creates a structural handshake and a symbolic union

The Peace Bridge is a new cycle and pedestrian bridge across the River Foyle in Derry in Northern Ireland. It was built by Derry's Ilex Urban Regeneration Company and opened in June 2011 after an eighteen month construction programme. The bridge was designed to improve relations between the largely unionist East Derry and the mainly nationalist West Derry, South Derry and city centre by improving linkages as part of wider regeneration plans.

The design, chosen after a competition, incorporates an S-shaped footbridge supported by two curved suspension structures which give a symbolic union across what was once a divided city. The architect behind the scheme described the bridge as "a structural handshake across the Foyle with an embrace at the centre of the river."

The project was jointly funded by the Department for Social Development (NI) and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (NI) together with matched funding from the EU Peace III (Shared Space) programme. Costs were around £14 million and the 235 metre bridge was designed by architects Wilkinson Eyre, who also designed the well known Gatehead Millennium Bridge.

The bridge is illuminated as a night-time landmark, allows leisure craft to safely pass at high tide, provides better and safer access from the waterside to the city's retail and commercial core and helps regenerate the river for leisure activity whilst also facilitating traffic free greenways on either side of the river. Landing points at the rear of Derry's Guildhall and by the Ebrington embankment were also incorporated into the design.

The bridge has won a string of awards including the Overall Planning Award and a Place Making Award by the Irish Planning Institute, the International Bridge Conference Award in Pittsburgh, a Structural Steel Design Award, a Waterways Trust Renaissance Award and an award for sustainability in design from the Institute of Civil Engineering (NI).

Social Development Minister (NI) Nelson McCausland said: "Over time the bridge will become an iconic representation that will define this city. Physically and metaphorically, it links what have been two communities and we hope it will encourage greater levels of positive engagement between them in future."