



**Tionól Réigiúnach  
an Deiscirt**

**Southern Regional  
Assembly**

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **For Immediate Release**

### **Cork City Welcomes European Delegates for Interregional Study Visit on Sustainable Urban Living**

**Cork city, Ireland – May 20<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> 2025**

Last week, the Southern Regional Assembly hosted over 40 delegates from nine European countries in Cork City for an Interregional Study Visit as part of the EU-funded PROXIMITIES project under the Interreg Europe programme.

PROXIMITIES, which is led by the Municipality of Reggio Emilia in Italy and managed in Ireland by the Southern Regional Assembly, supports policy development in peripheral urban areas by encouraging collaboration across Europe on issues such as accessibility, liveability, and connectivity.

The two-day visit highlighted how Cork City is addressing these themes in practice. Delegates were formally welcomed by the Lord Mayor of Cork, Cllr Dan Boyle, who is also a member of the Southern Regional Assembly, before taking part in site visits in Ballincollig and Blackrock that explored local efforts in sustainable urban planning, inclusive housing, and community-led placemaking.

In Ballincollig, the group was welcomed by Senator Garrett Kelleher and joined by representatives from Cork City Council's Biodiversity and Recreational Amenities departments, as well as the Ballincollig Tidy Towns Committee, for a guided tour of Ballincollig Regional Park. The visit coincided with National Biodiversity Week and highlighted local biodiversity initiatives and recreational enhancements in the area. The group also visited the Ballincollig Allotments, recognised as the hub of the Tidy Towns Committee's activities and a vibrant example of environmental stewardship.

Ballincollig's success, driven by strong community engagement and a deep pride of place, reflects a model of regeneration grounded in local participation. The town's recent recognition as Ireland's Tidiest Town and Tidiest Large Urban Centre in the 2024 SuperValu Tidy Towns Awards is a testament to this commitment. These achievements offer valuable lessons in strategic redevelopment that align closely with the PROXIMITIES project's goals.



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of supporting inclusive, connected, and sustainable urban environments in peripheral areas.

The delegates also visited Barrack Square and Ballincollig Town Centre, where they met with Michael Kelleher, Operations Director at O'Flynn Group, who provided insight into the private sector's role in local development and placemaking.

The study visit continued in Arus Mhuire, an age-friendly rightsizing scheme in Blackrock delivered by Cork City Council and managed by Tuath Housing. The scheme provides housing for people aged 60 and over wishing to downsize from their private homes. To mark European Neighbours Day, delegates were warmly welcomed by the residents, representatives of Tuath Housing and Cork City Council's Rightsizing Scheme, and Cllr Terry Shannon, who is also a member of the Southern Regional Assembly.

Arus Mhuire, which took part in a Community Walkability Assessment last year exemplifies how age-friendly design can support active ageing, wellbeing, and inclusion—key priorities within the PROXIMITIES framework.

*"This visit was an excellent opportunity to highlight Cork City and the Southern Region as leaders in community-led placemaking and inclusive urban development, as well as the work of the Southern Regional Assembly in the delivery of EU-funded projects"* said David Kelly, Director of the Southern Regional Assembly.

*"By sharing and learning from each other, regions across Europe can strengthen their policies and deliver better outcomes for their citizens."*

Áine Whelan, PROXIMITIES Project Manager, added: *"It was a real privilege to host our European partners in Cork city. The visits to Ballincollig and Arus Mhuire sparked important conversations around the role of local authorities, communities, and housing providers in shaping places that work for everyone."*

The visit gave delegates a chance to reflect on good practices in Cork city and the wider Southern Region, with many looking to adapt these insights to their own cities and regions across Europe. The study visit forms part of a broader knowledge exchange process across PROXIMITIES project partners, aimed at enhancing policy and practice in urban areas that are often overlooked in mainstream development.

## ENDS

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