

Sports Diplomacy Initiative Leads to 1st Purpose Built Baseball Diamond in Northern Ireland

31 May 2016

Newtownbreda, NORTHERN IRELAND: Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) is delighted to officially open with the Consulate of St Vincent and the Grenadines, at its Hydebank Playing Fields, the first purpose built baseball diamond in Northern Ireland, by hosting the 2016 Ulster Baseball Championships.

The exciting development will be home to several baseball and softball teams, including, the Northstars and Buccaneers Baseball Clubs, the Angels Softball Club and the Youth Baseball Academy. The facility funded by LCCC will also be utilised by teams competing within both Ulster and Ireland leagues.

The new baseball diamond was opened through a sports diplomacy initiative and lobbying with technical advice and guidance lead by Dr Christopher Stange of the Consulate of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to Northern Ireland.



L-R: & Dr Christopher Stange & Alderman Paul Porter exchanging gifts on behalf of their respective Governments during the opening ceremony of Northern Ireland's first baseball diamond

L-R: Dr Christopher Stange and Peter Kavanagh with Alderman Paul Porter (centre) cutting the ribbon to officially open Northern Ireland's first baseball diamond

The Chairman of LCCC's Leisure and Community Development Committee, Alderman Paul Porter cut the ribbon to officially open the much anticipated baseball facility. Dr Christopher Stange and Alderman Porter, then exchanged gifts on behalf of their respective governments in recognition of the event and each other's commitment to developing the sport in Northern Ireland through the project.

Speaking at the opening, Alderman Paul Porter said: "I was delighted to be given this opportunity to play a part in the official opening of the baseball diamond; and I am extremely proud that this facility is not only a first for the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area but also for Northern Ireland. The Council is committed to offering a diverse range of sports and most importantly providing a platform to encourage everyone to get active and try something different.

“The baseball diamond is an excellent addition to the wide range of leisure and community facilities operated by the Council. It provides a high-quality space where teams can practice and compete, promote development within both sports, host international tournaments and increase tourism to the area. I anticipate that this facility will spark further interest in both, baseball and softball, which at the moment, are ever growing.

“I would like to thank Dr Christopher Stange for his kind gift and send my sincere thanks to everyone involved in making this project a great success”, concluded Alderman Porter.

Dr Christopher Stange also commented: "I would like to commend Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and all stakeholders in bringing this sports initiative to fruition.

This first of its kind facility, unites both local and newer communities, many hailing from North America, Caribbean, South America, Asia and the Pacific, where baseball and softball are either national or main sports.”

Following the ribbon cutting, Alderman Paul Porter, along with Jose Santos, Head Coach, Buccaneers Baseball Club; Sean Shackley, Head Coach, Northstars Baseball Club; Jay Slevin, Head Coach, Angels Softball Club, and Peter Kavanagh, President of Baseball Ireland, took to the mound to throw out the ceremonial first pitch to youth catcher, Joshua Cuthbert.



L-R: Sean Shackley, Jose Santos, Joshua Cuthbert, Alderman Paul Porter, Jay Slevin, Peter Kavanagh

L-R: Dan Lawton, Cllr Thomas Beckett (Mayor); Dr Christopher Stange, Cllr. Christopher Stalford, Alderman Paul Porter

The 2016 Ulster Baseball Championships welcomed ten teams from across the UK and Ireland, with the Dublin Hurricanes coming out on top to be crowned champions. **ENDS**

Notes to editor

Final standings:

Dublin Hurricanes, Dublin Spartans, Ulster Buccaneers, Belfast Northstars, Liverpool Trojans Glasgow Baseball Association, Durham University Bishops, Baseball Scotland, Tonbridge Baseball Club, Cavan Comets

All pictures courtesy of Steven McAuley from McAuley Multimedia