

Friends of The Derry Walls Participate in Award-Winning Trans-Atlantic VR Heritage Project

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The Friends of The Derry Walls today announced their recent participation in “History & Heroes,” a groundbreaking trans-Atlantic Virtual Reality (VR) project. This innovative initiative, which recently garnered five Vega Digital Awards in the U.S., aims to digitally preserve cultural heritage sites and forge global connections through immersive educational experiences.

The “History & Heroes” project, led by Travis May, President of Texas-based tech company I2I OPS, successfully trialed its multiplayer VR lesson on the Grianán of Aileach from November 2024 to April 2025. This pilot program involved a unique collaboration between Ulster University students, Texoma Christian School (TCS) in Texas, and the Friends of the Derry Walls. The trial demonstrated remarkable results, achieving a 96.4% experiential retention rate and engagement scores ranging from 8.8 to 9.3.

Mr. May emphasized the project’s transformative potential, stating, “This initiative digitally safeguards historic sites, fostering deep cultural bonds. The program also equipped students with collaboration and research skills, surpassing traditional methods.” He added that the success of the Grianán of Aileach pilot paves the way for expanding the platform to other significant sites, with a particular focus on the iconic Derry Walls.

Niall McCaughan, Chair of the Friends of the Derry Walls, expressed enthusiasm for the project. “This is quite possibly a first in Ireland, where students on both sides of the Atlantic, working with others, have created a unique experience,” he noted. “Students in the US can now experience visiting major heritage

sites in Ireland.” Pending funding, the Friends of the Derry Walls hope to see the project’s next phase focus on the Derry Walls, Northern Ireland’s largest and most impressive state monument.

Edel Griffin, Lecturer at Ulster University’s Department of Global Business and Enterprise, highlighted the collaborative spirit of the project. “It was a pleasure to bring together global digital experts, local business and community leaders, and our own history students to co-create this forward-thinking learning experience,” Ms. Griffin stated. She explained that first-year history students volunteered to develop a virtual model of An Grianán of Aileach, recreating its story from early Neolithic times to its 19th-century reconstruction. Through immersive VR headsets, Ulster University students guided their Texan peers in real-time through the monument’s rich history, demonstrating how technology can transform education and foster global understanding.

The “History & Heroes” project not only reimagines teaching and learning but also creates a new portal for sharing heritage, supporting local enterprise, and attracting visitors through meaningful, technology-driven storytelling. The partners look forward to the next phase, with significant anticipation for the integration of the Derry Walls into this innovative VR platform.