



Gables end Murals to be replaced

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Paramilitary murals, such as the one on the left glorifying the Ulster Freedom Fighters in west Belfast, will be replaced under a government-funded scheme to redecorate Northern Ireland's gable ends and public spaces with more welcoming images.

The £3.3m project, unveiled yesterday, is to be administered by the Arts Council as a means of helping communities present themselves in a more positive light and develop a 'shared future'.

But the proposals were criticised by some tour guides. 'Tourists can see a lot of contemporary history in the Bog-side,' William Kelly, a tour guide, in Derry, told BBC Radio Ulster. 'It's a picture book that shows the last 35 years of conflict.'

Roisin McDonagh, head of the Arts Council in Northern Ireland, said: 'This project is not just about replacing Murals but also about getting people to think more broadly about how art and artists can improve their quality of life in local neighbourhoods.'

Some paramilitary murals should be in museums, she said. 'They are about our troubled past. We are a society moving forwards.'

Endorsing the scheme, the Northern Ireland Office minister David Hanson said it would be up to local communities to decide what they wanted. 'In Tullycarnet in east Belfast they have put a local Victoria Cross winner up on a mural; that is very positive.'

Photograph: Paul McErlane/Reuters

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