

Between the Bridges Charity Run a huge success

Nearly 5000 walkers, fun runners, joggers, club athletes and local personalities took to the Westlink/M1 to participate in the Between the Bridges Charity Run in aid of Northern Ireland Hospice yesterday (Sunday 8 March).

Organised by Cumann Spóirt an Phobail with support from Sport Northern Ireland, Belfast City Council, Department for Regional Development, Community Relations Council, Belfast Media Group and Athletics Northern Ireland the unique event marked the completion of the £103 million Westlink/M1 scheme.

Local athlete, David Morwood of Annadale Striders club was the first to cross the line in just 32 minutes 21 seconds to claim top prize of Podium4Sport and IKEA vouchers. The top female athlete was Gladys Ganiel O'Neill of Abbey A.C with an impressive time of just 37 minutes 21 seconds.

Minister for Regional Development Conor Murphy who sounded the horn to officially start the 5k event and who ran the 10k race, commented on the enthusiasm of everyone taking part saying: "This has been a successful community event for all those involved. I would like to commend the efforts of all those who have come along today to participate in this unique opportunity to run on the M1 and Westlink. I have enjoyed running the race and taking part for such a worthwhile cause."

The Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Tom Hartley started the 10k event commenting: "This is a great event for Belfast which has attracted thousands of runners and spectators into our city. Not only are you all keeping yourselves fit and healthy by getting out there today but you are raising much needed fund for such a worthy local charity, Northern Ireland Hospice."

Speaking at the prize giving Professor Judith Hill, Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Hospice spoke of the huge boost the funds raised will be to charity.

"It was such a privilege to be chosen as the official charity of the Between the Bridges run. Thank you to everyone who participated and who has raised sponsorship – these funds will go towards the £4 million we have to raise each year to enable us to continue providing hospice services for children, young people and adults living in our local community."

Organiser Dougie Adams from Cumann Spóirt an Phobail spoke of his delight at the event. He said "The success of this event shows what can be achieved by working in partnership with government, community, voluntary and statutory agencies. Many thanks to all the volunteers, stakeholders and of course all the participants who made the event a great success"

Chief Executive of Sport Northern Ireland Eamonn McCartan was among the many 10k runners. Speaking at the prize giving Mr McCartan said Sport Northern Ireland was delighted to support the event. "This is a great sporting occasion and a fantastic day out for all the family. I am delighted that nearly 5000 people participated in this event today and I hope you all enjoyed it as much as I did."

Photos from the event and full results for the 10k event will be available at www.betweenthebridges.org.uk <<http://www.betweenthebridges.org.uk>>