

# CHANGING IRELAND

AUTUMN '08

Issue 27

The National Magazine of the COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME - Funding 180 CDPs

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Inside:



Volunteering  
Pages 5



Island Life  
Pages 14-17



Sustaining the language  
Page 25

## SOW AND GROW!



Communities taking  
a fresh approach to  
sustainable living



This publication and most projects featured are part of the  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

## This ink once belonged to a vegetable

### - No choice but to go green



When climate change and peak oil hit home in the next few years, some communities will sink, some will swim. Whole countries will sink or swim depending on how well their local communities are prepared for the change. So say the sustainable development experts.

This edition is focussed on learning to swim. To keep the reader focussed, we have changed into our own 'swimwear'. In other words, it would have been useless for us to talk 'green' if we didn't 'go green' and this edition of 'Changing Ireland' is printed on 100% recycled paper with the cover pages coming from a sustainably-managed forest. The ink you see here is vegetable-based. The print-process involved rainwater and chemical-free production techniques.

Printers debate as to which is better - to use paper coming from sustainably-managed forests or recycled paper - both have their merits and from now onwards, 'Changing Ireland' will be printed on one or the other or a combination as you see here.

We don't want to be boasting - we'd rather other bigger circulation magazines were setting the lead - but we have now become the greenest magazine on the market in Ireland today. In the course of our work, we also adhere to the principles of Community Development with teenagers from Moyross learning workplace skills on our packing team while the project as a whole is managed by local adult volunteers.

While not planned this way, by going 'green' now, 'Changing Ireland' finds itself ahead of most private enterprises, Government departments and local authorities. The mindset should soon start to change, because while going 'green' used to be a costly affair, it's not anymore. Demand has risen globally for recycled paper - due to rising consumer awareness of environmental issues - and prices are dropping.

At least one community group we know may shortly go 'green' with their own local newsletter after they learned of the greater affordability of recycled paper.

If others follow, it could signal change from the ground up.

\* \* \* \* \*

To be serious about climate change and sustainable development we need to consider saving energy at every turn. And surprise-surprise, here we are being strongly influenced by you, our readers. While over 5000 people receive a print copy of 'Changing Ireland', up to 2,200 readers are downloading electronic PDF versions of each edition from our website. The internet is proving a powerful and environmentally-friendly medium.

\* \* \* \* \*

This edition is focussed on positive work by CDPs and other community groups to make life more environmentally sustainable in our cities, on offshore islands and in rural areas. It also looks at environmental issues faced by communities and examines where CDPs stand when a community encounters conflict. And never mind the budget - Horace has advice on the back-page on re-styling your office at next to no cost.

\* \* \* \* \*

Until next time, go well, go 'green', and remember that not every vegetable ends up on a dinner plate!

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### Disclaimer

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the author concerned. They do not, by any means, necessarily reflect the views of the Editor, the editorial team, the management committee of the Community Development Network, Moyross, Ltd., or the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

### Cover Photo

**Photographer:** Andrew Downes.

**Caption:** Katie and Eshter in Ballybane Community Organic Garden in Galway City during Harvest Day last year. The Garden is supported by Ballybane CDP. See full report on pages 8-10.

Thanks to Fiona Donovan, co-ordinator of the Galway Healthy Cities Project, for her permission to use the photograph.

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THE COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT NETWORK



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## Next Edition!

Our next edition – due out in January – will focus on Consultation and Participation, with a special focus on Regeneration. We're looking for examples of good practise, innovative approaches and how communities engage in real consultation and how they encourage participation by the most marginalised in society. We'll also examine how communities cope when on the receiving end of poor consultation. Give us a ring, email or drop a line.

## “Thanks, you saved our lives!”

**- But Toxic Toothpaste Still Available**



‘Changing Ireland’ ran a story in our last edition to highlight an incident where toxic toothpaste was supplied (legally) to asylum-seekers in Kildare. A support group, backed by the local CDP and Partnership company, brought the case to our attention. They saw it as a symptom of how asylum-seekers are treated in this country.

The story also showed how collective action can be effective and a different safe toothpaste was supplied to the people in Kildare after the support group intervened. ‘Cool Mate’ toothpaste is cheap but it contains a toxic ingredient that causes bleeding and attacks the body’s organs.

Alert reader Stefania Minervino, from North Brunswick Street in Dublin 7, also fell victim. She told us that her gums bled after using the toothpaste, but she did not make the link until she read our report.

She wrote:

“Dear ‘Changing Ireland’, Thanks for your article, you saved our lives! I refer to your article about ‘Cool Mate’. My husband bought the toothpaste in a

wholesale retailer in Clondalkin, Dublin and we used it for about 10 days...

“I hope that there will be some improvements for asylum seekers in direct provision and for the rest of the general public as well. People do not understand that we are all in the same boat, as human beings with rights and as consumers.”

Stefania went on to complain about the toxic toothpaste to the National Consumer Agency and the Irish Medicines Board, from where she was referred to the Department of Health and Children as the competent authority with regard to “cosmetic” products. Her complaint is still being looked into.

‘Cool Mate’ is – as far as we know – still legally available through wholesalers here despite being on a list of dangerous products produced weekly by the EU.

Meanwhile, the system that ties some asylum-seekers down for years in cramped accommodation remains in place, though the support groups were at least buoyed by the success of their campaign in Kildare to highlight the tough conditions.

## Rurals go urban for Wexford launch

Rural volunteers and staff from South West Wexford CDP travelled to the county capital on October 24th to see Minister of State, John Curran, launch their Operational Plan 2008-2011.

The launch was held in Wexford town to give more of the key stakeholders a chance to attend. Among those present was New Ross TD, Sean Connick, Wexford County Council Chairman, Peter Byrne and Seamus Boland, CEO of Irish Rural Link.

As guest speaker, Seamus expressed his support for the project and lamented the downgrading of the national Combat Poverty Agency. ‘Changing Ireland’ editor, Allen Meagher, who chaired the launch, noted that the Ramsgrange-based project receives core-funding of 180,000 from the Department and attracts over five times that sum from other sources to run various projects. It employs 50 people.

Minister of State Curran said, “If every CDP did the same as you, I’d be a very happy Minister. You have really set the bar high and your work provides a very good template for others to follow.”

The project’s 94-page plan was published on the back of key research conducted by Nexus.

## Tuam immigrants set leading example

‘Tuam a Town of Many Nations: Profiling Diversity in Tuam’ was published during the summer and provides an outstanding example of how to engage people in the community to

research their own lives and needs.

The research is one of the first of its kind produced in the Republic.

Training was organised by the local CDP in the County Galway town for people from 14 countries living locally. Working voluntarily, the new field workers called door-to-door and interviewed over 550 people, talking to them in their own languages.

Funding for the study was provided through the Dormant Accounts Funds, RAPID and Galway Rural Development, and the researchers represented many of the target nationalities, including Nigeria, Poland, Russia, Lithuania, Romania, Brazil, Nigeria, The Gambia, Slovakia and China.

Loretta Needham, co-ordinator of the Tuam Community Development Resource Centre – the local CDP – said they knew the town had become diverse and that migrants had contributed to the town’s economic success, but they did not know how many nationalities were represented, what the age profile was and, crucially, what their needs were.

Clearly, the biggest need was for English language skills, followed by an improved health service, activities for young people, the right to work, training, improved public transport and better employment opportunities.

While 20% of interviewees had experienced some form of racism or discrimination, almost 70% affirmed that Tuam was “Excellent, I really like it” or agreed it was “Good, it’s a nice place to live.”

A large number of immigrants hoped to make their permanent home in Tuam, a finding that may echo in other towns around the country.



## Key issues for migrants: on the web

The Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI) is a national organisation concerned with the rights of migrant workers and their families. It takes a Community Development approach to its work and is open to working with local community groups including CDPs.

Established in 2001, the MRCI has succeeded in empowering many migrant workers and seeks to influence policy development at national level.

An MRCI article for ‘Changing Ireland’ readers – focussing on the key issues facing migrant workers – now features in the resource section of our website: [www.changingireland.ie/resources.html](http://www.changingireland.ie/resources.html)

## Register to vote for '09 - Deadline is Nov. 25th

Local elections are taking place in the Republic next year and to register to vote you must be aged over 18 and be living in Ireland over 6 months. The voter’s registration form for the local elections is available from local authority offices or through their websites (eg [www.dublincity.ie](http://www.dublincity.ie))

People have to register by November 25th.



# Volunteer Profile:

# Dolores Corcoran

Dolores Corcoran is a voluntary management committee member of Cumann Na Daoine CDP, based in Youghal, Co. Cork. Since her entry into the Community Development Programme as a volunteer, she has become a paid development worker with Dungarvan CDP. Here she talks about her volunteering.

**What are you reading at the moment?**

'Secrets in the Attic' by Virginia Andrews.

**What's the last film you saw?**

The new Batman film 'Dark Knight'.

**Person you most admire?**

Michael Schumacher, he's the world's best!

**The top 4 issues in Ireland today?**

The down turn in the economy, health service, drug and alcohol misuse, being honest. Most issues today can be as a result of our economy be it on the up or down.

**We need more ...**

... action! More work and educational opportunities for men and a proper support structure for the CDP Programme.

**We need less ...**

... talk shops and bureaucracy.

**How long are you volunteering with the CDP?**

I have been involved for over nine years now.

**How and why did you get involved?**

Two people in particular got me involved - Flo Dineen and a nun by the name of Sr Maura. It was at a time in my life when my self confidence and self-esteem were very low and they thought it would do me the world of good. They were right! Ha Ha!

**What difference has being involved made to you?**

It has made a huge difference both personally and professionally. Being part of the CDP I regained my confidence,

challenged my own views, gained skills in management committee roles, staff support and supervision training, facilitation skills, putting together work plans for the Department. Also, it meant meeting people from different socio-economic backgrounds to myself. I definitely discovered loads and it was a place I could be me.

And now I work as a Community Development Worker, so yep it certainly has changed my life.

**Have things changed for (your community, eg women, older people) today?**

Cumann Na Daoine has very strong women and men's groups. They outreach into the community in Youghal and beyond. It is great to see the growth in those people within their own community. They have a big input into the CDP. A disability action and awareness group was recently set up in the CDP and they have been very active in Youghal in its perceptions of people with disabilities. Our biggest news is we acquired our own building which is accessible to everyone in the community

**What motivates you as a volunteer?**

The learning you get from being involved, it continues to challenge me, not alone by attending meetings where we have to sort out business, but it challenges my own thought

process and views. It gives you a look at the bigger picture - nothing is black and white (well most of the time). It motivates me too to look at all the people I was first involved with and what the CDP did for the them and the community of Youghal.

**How do you get new volunteers?**

Just the other week we had a volunteer induction night. We put up posters, spoke to people involved in other groups, our staff encouraged participants of our groups to come along and 12 interested people turned up. Members of the management committee welcomed everyone and spoke about the work and structures of Cumann Na Daoine and how we got involved. It was very informal and they filled out a questionnaire just for us to get a general idea in what area they would like to volunteer in or what their interests were. They will get a couple of nights training on Community Development and hopefully we will have extra volunteers on our management committee and sub groups as a result.

• For more information about Cumann Na Daoine CDP contact Elmarie McCarthy Co-ordinator on: 024-91900.

**Note:** If you wish to nominate a volunteer from your CDP, call the editor.



# Inside?

How green are you inside your community centre, office and home?

1. Water usage: **Put a brick in your cistern** (the average toilet uses 8 litres per flush). Don't leave your taps running.
2. When making tea or coffee, **only fill the kettle as much as you need**. It takes a lot of electricity to heat water.
3. Return print cartridges for recycling. **Never throw a spent toner cartridge away**. Note: Refilled ink cartridges are about 1/3 cheaper than buying new ones.
4. **When buying furniture, it doesn't have to be real wood**.
5. **Don't always print**: First, ask yourself if you can **cut and paste** the information into a document that you can store in a computer file.
6. Use paper efficiently. **Making two-sided prints** and copies.
7. **Recycle the paper you use, and use recycled paper**. Install bins in several office locations to make it easy to collect paper for recycling or for reuse as notepaper. And commit to purchasing recycled paper, it's just as good.
8. **Replace stand-alone office products** (eg printers, photocopiers, fax machines) **with multifunction systems**.
9. **Switch off computers and monitors** when not in use. Newer photocopiers have an energy-saving mode.
11. **Buy used furniture**, such as from non-profit shop Busy Bees in Dublin. See page 12.
12. Switch your old standard light bulbs for **energy-efficient bulbs**.
13. Follow these steps, as many as you can, and lead your community by example. **Employ the principles of Community Development and involve stakeholders in any decisions made**.

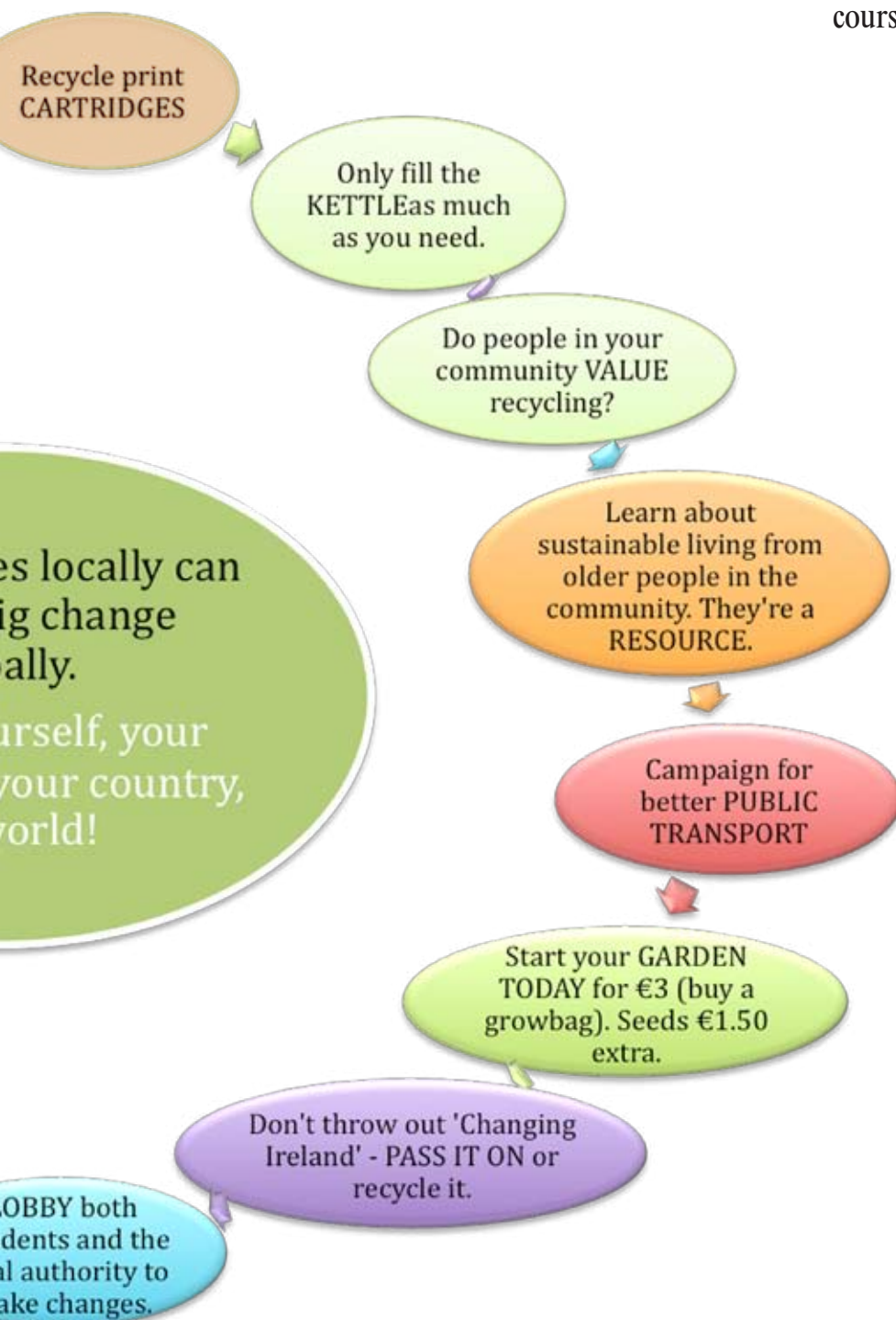




# Is Your Community?

# Outside?

How green are you outside, in your project's wider community work? Solutions to consider include environmental schemes, garden competitions and courses, encouraging cycling and much more:



1. **Think about what your community already does** (eg JI-run environmental schemes / grass-cutting, etc) because it could tick a lot of 'green' boxes you haven't thought of.
  2. Has the school in your community a **Green Flag**? See page 27.
  3. **Devise a green policy for your organisation.**
  4. **Buy a 'growbag'** for about €3 and a bag of seeds for €1.50 and you can start gardening.
  5. **Plant vegetables** rather than flowers. Get in contact with your local authority's horticultural departments.
  7. **Plant trees.**
  8. Join the **Global Action Plan** initiative. See page 27.
  9. **Start a community garden** or better still a community organic garden. See pages 9-10.
  10. **Campaign** for better public transport in your community. Eg a Rural Transport Initiative.
  11. **Active Age groups** provide a real opportunity to link in with people with sustainable living skills.
  12. **If you are a CDP, Partnership company, FRC or well-positioned community organisation**, you are perfectly situated to lobby both the residents and the local authority to make changes.
  13. In the newly built **Adamstown**, outside Dublin, everything is designed to be within walking distance. Can you change the location of services you provide or meetings you attend to encourage legwork rather than using the car?
  14. Do residents in your Community **really** know why it is important to recycle? Do most people do green things just to save money?
  15. If you are undergoing regeneration in your area, seek to have **community allotments** for gardening included in the plans.
- Does your project pay **mileage** for cycling to nearby meetings?

## Ballybane shows how to sow and grow

May '08



On September 11th, I arrived at the Ballybane Community Organic Garden in Galway city for the project's Open Day. It was a half-hour before the event drew to a close and I was very fortunate to go home with a precious handful of organic tomatoes and a jar of chutney, *writes Allen Meagher*.

Trapped in a greenhouse with Barney and a dozen delighted children, I watched from the corner of my eye as visitors in the greenhouse next door tucked into the last of the vegetable soup, salads and hummus. It was a sell-out gig.

The atmosphere was great, with everyone chatting about organic gardening. Local experts were on hand to give tips and nutritionists and cooks attended to make sure people went home with something in their heads as well as in their tummies.

Three years ago, the area was wasteland. Through the local Ballybane/Mervue CDP - in league with a host of other agencies who came together as part of the Galway Healthy Cities initiative - the Community Organic Garden was set up in 2004. The City Council provided the site, a gardener attends at regular times to advise novice gardeners, and kids from the crèches and schools are frequent visitors.

Participants from the local area have become experienced organic gardeners and groups have traveled from other towns and cities - for example, the PAUL Partnership in Limerick - to see if they can replicate Ballybane's success.

Of note to community groups struggling to increase participation - men love the gardening.

Foods grown to date include potatoes, corn, lettuce, tomatoes, scallions, coriander and runner beans.

The Ballybane Organic Garden Project is a joint project between Galway City Council, HSE West, RAPID, NUI Galway, the VEC and Ballybane/Mervue CDP. The HSE's Health Promotion Services coordinated the involvement of their Community Nutrition Department and Home Management Department. The Organic Garden is located near Ballybane Church.

Visitors are welcome to Ballybane. For more information contact: Ballybane/Mervue CDP. T: 091-768305. E: [cdp4@eircom.net](mailto:cdp4@eircom.net). Or call Fiona Donovan from Galway Healthy Cities 091-548518. E: [fiona.donovan@mailn.hse.ie](mailto:fiona.donovan@mailn.hse.ie)

Also, for more information, visit [www.galwayhealthycities.ie](http://www.galwayhealthycities.ie)

Sept '08







## ***Garden is a beacon of hope, says Minister***

Minister of State for Food and Horticulture, Trevor Sargent, visited the Ballybane Organic Garden Project on April 30th and predicted that it would become the first fully certified Community Organic Garden in Ireland.

The Minister said Ballybane was “a beacon of hope and community resilience against a backdrop of food insecurity worldwide and rising food prices.”

He told the ‘Galway Independent’ he was keen, working with colleagues in the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, to formulate a policy nationally to promote community gardens similar to the Ballybane project.

In terms of agricultural development, Minister Sargent wants to see 5% of Ireland’s land area used for organic production by 2012.

# Organic

## ***Wider benefits of Organic Community Gardens***

“Community-based organic gardens not only help promote organic gardening skills and awareness of healthy eating, but also have a number of other benefits. There are health benefits from increased physical activity, and from consumption of fresh and affordable organic vegetables and fruit. Taking part in a community garden project is a very positive experience. It promotes social interaction and a great sense of shared achievement. It raises awareness of the environmental benefits of local organic food production, which generates fewer carbon emissions from ‘food miles’, and by using natural fertilizers and methods of weed and pest control, avoids the use of harmful chemicals. Generally, the project is a great encouragement to participants to continue growing organically for themselves, and in some cases, to consider growing commercially.”

- Organic Centre, Rossinver, Co. Leitrim.

## ***Leitrim-led project is ‘Growing in Confidence’***

Not many projects produce such tangible, concrete results that they can, literally, be consumed. The ‘Growing in Confidence’ Community Food Project is one such project.

Since 2004, the Health Promotion Department of HSE West in partnership with the Organic Centre in County Leitrim, has helped set up six organic gardens.

The Growing in Confidence project was able to spread its wings quickly and efficiently due to the existence ‘on the ground’ of CDPs, FRCs and other reputable local community organisations.

Participants, under the guidance of an experienced organic gardening mentor, learn to grow their own organic vegetables, and with the help of trained tutors, also learn to prepare and cook healthy, fresh produce.

The participants have included asylum seekers, men’s groups, parents on a tight budget, older people and people with disabilities. Local community groups have helped recruit participants (approximately 12-15 per per location) while the funding comes from the HSE, the Department of Agriculture and Food, and PEACE II. The work involves each year close to 200 people in 15 community settings in Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal and in Northern Ireland.

The benefits have been recognised by external evaluators from the Sligo Institute of Technology, observing:

- Nutritional, physical activity and mental health benefits.
- Participants made positive changes in relation to both behaviour and knowledge.

## ***Get the ‘How To Guide’***

The steering committee of the ‘Growing in Confidence’ Community Food Project has written a comprehensive ‘How to Guide’ for groups wishing to start community gardens. The ‘How To Guide’ to organic gardening is freely available from a link on their webpage: [www.theorganiccentre.ie/community\\_food\\_project](http://www.theorganiccentre.ie/community_food_project).

The Organic Centre also incidentally sells a tremendous choice of seeds and you can avail of their online shop if you are unable to call personally.

## ***No such thing as ‘a derelict site’***

Development worker Seamus Diskin writes about how it took hard physical work – and seaweed – to turn a derelict site into Ballybane Organic Community Garden:

“There were, as one would expect, many challenges and problems to be overcome in the early stages. The piece of earth in question was on the site of a City Council reservoir and had been neglected for years. The initial task of clearing and tilling the ground unearthed a motley variety of litter, scrap, builder’s debris and stones.

“With the determination of a group focussed on acting collectively, the ground was dug over by hand, bit by bit, and cleared of docks, thistles and ragwort. Scutch grass was pulled out and ridges began to take shape.

“...In Nature’s beautiful balanced way, the winter westerly gales threw up tonnes of excellent organic manure on the nearby Ballyloughane beach, and the City Council crews loaded and transported it to the Garden, rather than to the spoil heap where it is usually dumped. The rain washed the seaweed and it made the soil fertile for potatoes, cabbages, lettuce and carrots, as it has done on the Western seaboard for hundreds of years.

“The Garden was extended recently and now comprises nearly an acre and a half. Plans are under way to cater for more groups: a relaxing space for older people, a willow maze for the younger ones, a barbeque for teenagers, raised beds for people who cannot stoop, more space for vegetables, flowers, soft fruits and fruit trees, a propagation tunnel to germinate seeds. Who knows what the future will bring?”

The full article by Seamus Diskin on how Ballybane turned the area around will be made available in the resource section of our website: [www.changingireland.ie](http://www.changingireland.ie)

# Sustainable Communities

## *Local community pushing town towards sustainability*

**Knockanrawley Resource Centre** was the first CDP in the country to have an Organic Community Garden attached to the project. The garden - over a half-acre of cultivated land - was established in 1997 after the local authority granted the CDP a 99-year lease.

Now the CDP want Tipperary Town Council to vote in favour of a new policy proposal whereby they would turn over unused public land so communities can use it for organic cultivation.

In time, as the town awakens to sustainable development, there is no reason why this might not mark the beginning of Tipperary's journey to become one of Ireland's 'Transition Towns', a town ready to survive 'Peak Oil' and climate change.

The Garden was set up as a resource to engage and train individuals and to increase awareness of environmental issues and sustainable development in the community.

Since 'Changing Ireland' visited the project in 2006, Knockanrawley's gardeners have taken home top prizes for their produce and are contenders for All-Ireland titles in the future.

It began in January with the launch of the ABC project, or to use its full name, the Allotment Back-garden Community-garden. The participants planned the garden, planted it and grew the produce, with advice from tutor, Marian Clarke.

"Eighteen people are involved with most of them coming from the CDP's target groups," said project co-ordinator Ruth Smith (pictured). "We reclaimed a patch of land and set up two ordinary allotments and one container allotment."

The produce was outstanding so the group entered the Tipperary Town Show and won first prizes for their carrots, cabbage and spuds (beating competition from gardens using artificial fertilizer). The prize-winning produce was destined for the All-Ireland Vegetable championship to be held at the Tullamore Show. However, weather led to the event's cancellation.

"We might have won, who knows. Not bad for our first year, eh!" stated Ruth.

Meanwhile, 2007 saw 16 women sign up for the Kite Back To Work initiative and they completed a Fetac Level 3 horticultural course. For this, the participants worked in groups of four to a plot and produced onions,

broadbeans, lettuce and potatoes. After harvesting, they stepped indoors and set to work using their produce in cookery classes in the community kitchen.

"We want people to learn about the nutritional properties of the food they grow," said Ruth. "Also, we are very aware that there were zero food miles involved in the project. Through looking at the environmental impact of the food we produce, we aim to gain a



greater understanding of the local / global issues at stake."

Lately, the children have successfully developed their own garden area.

For more information, contact Knockanrawley Resource Centre, Tipperary Town, Co. Tipperary. T: 062-52688. F: 062-52206. E: [knockanrawley@eircom.net](mailto:knockanrawley@eircom.net) W: [www.knockanrawley.ie](http://www.knockanrawley.ie)

To read our 2006 report on Knockanrawley, check our online archive: [www.changingireland.ie/ISSUE18.pdf](http://www.changingireland.ie/ISSUE18.pdf)

The official opening of a new extension to Knockanrawley Resource Centre took place on September 8th when Dr. Martin Mansergh unveiled a children's stone wishing seat to commemorate the expansion. The Centre has been in existence for 15 years.



## **Plans to restart Youghal's Farmers Market**

Cumann na Daoine CDP in Youghal, Co. Cork, helped to establish Youghal's Farmers' Market in August, 2005, and it proved most popular. Shortly after its launch, RTE's environmental show 'Eco-Eye' hosted by Duncan Stewart brought the market to national attention.

For the past two years, however, the market has not taken place. Now, plans have been lodged with the local authority in the hope of relaunching the venture.

Youghal Farmer's Market grew from a community training course, the Global Action Plan (GAP) run by Cumann na Daoine. The CDP hosted a series of courses demonstrating how best to minimise a household's impact on the environment and earned the support of ECAD (East Cork Area Development) which funded Cumann na Daoine to provide 10 additional GAP courses in East Cork.

Participants on the Global Action Plan set up a food group and worked with Youghal Chamber of Commerce and stallholders to establish the Farmer's Market. The original venue was Barry's Lane near the Clock Gate. A new location is now needed.

"We are in the process of trying to revitalise the Farmers Market," said Neil Walker from ECAD. "We are working very hard to find a new home for the market and have applied for planning permission."



# Shanganagh:

## Differing perspectives on 'the greater good'

By Gearóid Fitzgibbon

"CDP work means spending time facilitating meetings and mediating between people when one section of a community want something and another section don't, or want something else," says Anne Traynor, Shanganagh CDP Co-ordinator.

"The community does not want the traffic associated with the upgrading works due to be carried out on Shanganagh Wastewater Treatment Works. It is being hoisted upon us and it's proven to be very divisive. Bonds we built up over the years with the more affluent neighbourhoods that surround us are being broken because of this issue."

Here, 'Changing Ireland' reporter Gearóid Fitzgibbon examines the role played by Community Development Projects when an environmental challenge arises.

### BLUE FLAG LOST

When major infrastructure comes to your town, parish or estate, it is not always easy to be led by notions of "the greater good." One wonders how local community groups and residents objecting to the construction of a waste water treatment plant in Shanganagh in Dublin felt when the news was announced in early September of this year that The European Court of Justice had ruled against Ireland's failure to comply with the Urban Waste Water Directive in six areas, one of which was Shanganagh. This followed just weeks after nearby Killiney Beach lost its Blue Flag status.

### EU AT ITS BEST

To an outsider, surely here was an example of the EU at its best, coercing national governments to pull their socks up and protect water and public health. At the same time however, local councillors had attempted, for the second time in less than a year, to suspend progress on the planned upgrade of the wastewater treatment plant at Shanganagh.

### DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

So where does a local community group position itself in this? Does it 'represent' the broader goals of clean water, proper treatment facilities? Or does it 'represent' its immediate constituents, the local residents concerned by the immediate drawbacks and construction hazards involved in upgrading such infrastructure? Should it facilitate the community's expression of concern, or does it lead those concerns? And what should a CDP do when an issue it is dealing with becomes divisive?

# Community Development & Conflict Resolution



### TREATING WASTEWATER IS THE EASY PART

The Dún Laoghaire/Rathdown Council has been planning to upgrade the Shanganagh wastewater treatment plant since 2001. Currently, only basic preliminary treatment is carried out at the Works and untreated effluent is discharged to Dublin Bay. The upgraded plant will treat wastewater from the expanding Bray and Shanganagh catchment areas. The treated effluent will then be discharged to the sea.

This involves upgrading Shanganagh Wastewater Works, building a transfer pipeline between Bray and Shanganagh and an underground storage tank at Bray. The existing Shanganagh water treatment works will be extended southwards onto a green amenity area used by residents of the Shanganagh Cliffs estate. The finished project should mean cleaner coastal waters, and greater capacity to deal with greater population.

### TRUCK TRAFFIC IS THE PROBLEM

A €73 million contract has been awarded to a consortium and work is due to commence before the end of this year.

However – and this is where problems arise locally – agreement has yet to be achieved on a safe route for construction traffic during the period of the works. Despite meetings with community groups and residents over a number of years, it is far more likely the trucks will be directed through the CDP's area than through any of the better-off estates.

Some locals in the Shankill area say that the selected route for the construction traffic represents a health and safety hazard. Objectors argue that the 2001 environmental impact assessment only considered the upgrade to the treatment works and failed to include the pipeline, the storm holding tank at Bray and, crucially, the traffic elements of the plan.

The European Commission took the Irish Government to court in 2004 for failing to have the proper treatment plants in place.

### GREENER, BUT MEANER

So where is the greater good? Does the government and local authority plough ahead and seek to deliver the project

upgrade on time, and save the country millions in potential fines or ensure that complete community consent and consensus is achieved? How should CDPs be involved?

It's a continuing debate. And a continuing struggle for Shanganagh. In a nutshell, everyone wants clean beaches, but no community wants to take the truck traffic necessary to make it possible and – no surprise – the community likely to see the trucks coming is the one with the least wealth.

South Dublin may be getting greener, but meaner too.

## Community's Concerns

The thought of up to 50 trucks a day roaring through your quiet residential estate would worry any parent. At a meeting late last year in Dublin between community representatives and Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, the residents raised their concerns about predicted heavy truck traffic through residential estates in Shankill when work begins on upgrading the Shanganagh Wastewater Treatment Works.

Anne Traynor and John Nolan of Shanganagh CDP were among those representing the community.

The reps pointed out that the project was not supported by whole community. They said the Council was "not willing to engage properly with community".

They said the council did not acknowledge residents who objected. Corbawn residents made a total of 212 submissions while 170 signatures were submitted by the CDP on behalf of residents.

## Latest Development

On September 8th, a majority of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Councillors voted against a motion which would have further delayed the beginning of the upgrade to the Shanganagh Wastewater Treatment Works.

During a lengthy debate, Councillors were reassured that there would be an independent assessment of the proposed traffic management plans for the construction period of the upgrade works.

It was also agreed that in order to ensure a reduction in construction traffic, the contractor SDD Shanganagh will be required to examine all options available for minimising the removal of spoil from the site.

The Council said it is "determined" that the project will begin before the end of the year.

## BUSYBEES

### RECYCLED FURNITURE & COMMUNITY JOBS

People in Dublin projects who are into Community Development and the environment and want to buy furniture should head for 'Busybees', a furniture removal and recycling project in the capital.

Busybees opened in 2005 in Summerhill, Dublin 1, selling what they call "pre-loved furniture". It became popular and they have now opened a second outlet on Bridgefoot Street where they place a special emphasis on retro and vintage furniture.

The original transport team of Sharon Ryan and Christopher Grimes (pictured right) both started as Community Employment Scheme participants and they are now employed as transport and logistics managers with Busybees.

"We take our furniture quite seriously now as it's how we make our living and it's great to see the joy on someone's face when they receive their furniture," said Sharon.

Busybees was set up – unusually for a business – with a community development ethos. It is an offspring of Sunflower Recycling which was established to create

employment in Dublin's inner city in 1995. Sunflower Recycling employs 30 long-term unemployed via the Community Employment Scheme and four people through the Jobs Initiative.

The project has also gained recognition for recycling as an option for future job creation and Sunflower's collection boxes are a familiar

sight in business premises around the city.

In relation to Busybees, as Sunflower Recycling manager Bernie Walsh says, "We're saving the planet one sofa at a time."

For more info: T: 086-833-9684.

E: [sunflow2@eircom.net](mailto:sunflow2@eircom.net) W: [www.furniturerecyclingdublin.com](http://www.furniturerecyclingdublin.com) and [www.sunflowerrecycling.ie](http://www.sunflowerrecycling.ie)



## HELP ME HORACE



### PPPs are making me sound like a stuttering eejit

Help Me Horace  
Please! Please! Please! What are PPPs?  
Sincerely  
Peter Piper,  
Picked-a-Peck  
Of Pickled Pepper

*Horace Helps*  
PPPs are Public Private Partnerships. They are very like any other partnership people enter into. Generally you promise your partner one thing in public and get away with whatever you can in private.

### Pay Freeze Not too Hot

Dear Horace  
Are CDPs facing a pay freeze and if so how will we sell it to our staff?  
Yours  
Therese Yurer, Strapped CDP, Iceland

*Horace Helps*  
You tell them that working in CDPs is so cool and is a chance to work right at the cutting edge. That way they can't complain when the edges get cut off the budget and there is nothing cooler than a freeze.

### My World is turned upside down!

Help Me Horace,  
My world is all confused and upside down! All the great capitalist countries are doing everything opposite. They are privatising health services and water supplies while nationalising the banks. Please explain what's happening.  
Sincerely,  
Sosha Lizt, Left Bank Arts Project

*Horace Helps*  
Well if you put the State and its bureaucracy in

charge of a banking crisis the whole thing slows down into an orderly queue or waiting list thus preventing any volatile run on the bank. Hard to run when your standing in a long line.

### Don't Worry Be Happy!

Dear Horace  
A wee while ago banks were bursting at the seams with money to lend. Now it seems the banks are just bursting or about to go bust. I'm really confused by all the conflicting financial advice and analysis.  
Yours  
Ena Hock, 2 Myeyes, Market Downs, Wall St.

*Horace Helps*  
This reminds me of that old saying:  
If you owe the bank €100,000 and can't pay then you need to be worried, but if you owe the bank €100 million and can't pay then they need to be worried!  
Now the banks owe €700 billion and can't pay but no-one needs to worry, the tax payer will look after it.



# Social Inclusion & ECO-COMMUNITIES

## Eco-villages must be inclusive

Write Kerry E'lyn Larkin and Mairéad Lineen \*

Eco-villages and other “intentional communities” (where groups of people deliberately come together to create a community) are a great opportunity to help re-connect people at a social level.

While we want a project that can build a community in a general sense, we also want to take it to another level by addressing equality and justice issues. A lot of ecovillages and intentional communities stop at the first level.

The bulk of the population of ecovillages and cohousing projects seems to be middle class people; and some members of our group have been wondering why.

Building a settlement like ours presents us with an opportunity to look at social justice issues such as power, participation and inclusiveness.

The core principles in our group's vision include not only community building, but also accessibility and equality. We are striving to make the community open and welcoming to people from all backgrounds, abilities and walks of life. So, a subgroup in GSCP has been examining how we can build an ethos of equality in the group, and how we can remove barriers for marginalised or minority groups to joining and participating in the group.

The first step, we believe, is to raise our own awareness and understanding and to look at our own attitudes and prejudices. We're bringing in the Galway One World Centre to

help us examine how the issue of racism might affect a group like ours and what we can do about it.

This will be followed by social class awareness training, which we're working on with Jean Bridgeman from NUI Maynooth's Working Class Studies Group. We hope to identify the steps we can take to reduce the barriers that class and classism have set up.

We have other ideas simmering, including a consultation with marginalised groups on how the project might be made more open and accessible. We're trying to explore questions that most of us don't normally consider. This is no easy task, and we need other people's perspectives – especially those of people from marginalised groups. So, if you have any ideas, please contact us. Or you might simply like to know more about our group.

The Galway Sustainable Community Project (GSCP) is a group based in Galway City that hopes to build an ‘intentional’ community with ecological principles. Their vision is to create a purpose-built village somewhere in the west of Ireland, whose residents will work together to produce some of their own food and energy and build a strong, close-knit community. The village will be built and run in a way that's environmentally sustainable, with energy-efficient homes built from natural materials. It will have private houses for each family, and commonly owned facilities where residents can cook, eat, work and socialise together.

The GSCP group has been working together for over a year.

We have a long road ahead of us, but this type of project has the potential to overcome problems in contemporary society, including unsustainable living, the breakdown in community, and inequality and imbalance of power in society.

Modern society has isolated us from one another and we need to be pro-active. GSCP wants to build a real community, with grassroots participatory democracy, strong connections among people, and neighbours who look after and depend on each other.

\* Kerry E'lyn Larkin works in Clann (Family) Resource Centre ([www.clannresourcecentre.com](http://www.clannresourcecentre.com)) in Oughterard, County Galway. Mairéad Lineen is a piano teacher and an activist on environmental and social justice issues and lives in Galway city.



**“The bulk of the population of eco-villages and cohousing projects seems to be middle class people”**

## Transition Towns gear down for climate change

By Morag Friel



Transition Town Initiatives are marking a new sustainable way forward. This international movement, the most upbeat option to emerge in a long time, has been described as “more like a party than a protest march”. In simple terms, it is a template for how to bring a community together to build local resilience in the face of peak oil and climate change.

It started in Kinsale here in Ireland when Rob Hopkins and his Permaculture students came up with an Energy Descent Action Plan after learning about peak oil.

Transition Initiatives developed from this and word is spreading quietly but rapidly and the movement is well on its way to becoming a global one.

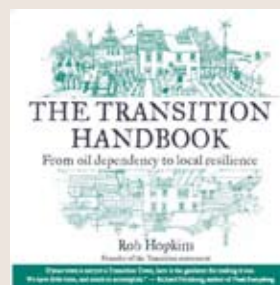
Rob Hopkins, the founder of the concept, has written ‘The Transition Handbook’ to help others get started. Concepts like re-localisation, small is beautiful and positive vision are all part of the new approach. The message is one of practicality and also of inspiration.

In Ireland, there are two official Transition Initiatives, in Kinsale and Kildare. About 20 other communities are on their way, together, they form part of the wider T.I. network. The mission of this network is “to inspire, encourage, network, support and train communities as they consider, adopt, adapt and implement the transition model in their locale.”

Contact: Davie Philip at Cultivate 01-6745773.

W: [www.transitiontowns.org](http://www.transitiontowns.org)

Morag Friel works for Feasta, the Foundation for the Economics of Sustainability. To read about more environmental movements that can support your community to change, check out Morag's report on page 26.



# SUSTAINING ISLAND LIFE

There are almost 3000 people living on Ireland's offshore islands, as follows, according to the 2006 Census. This list does not include Achill Island which is connected to the mainland by a bridge:

## Island Population

Árainn Mhór	522
Inis Bó Finne	36
Inis Fraoigh	9
Toraigh	142
Gabhla	4
Coney	6
Clare Island	136
Inis Bigil	24
Inishcottle	3
Inishlyre	7
Inisturk	58
Clynish	5
Inseagort	1
Islandmore	1
Inishbofin	199
Inis Mór	824
Inis Oírr	247
Inis Meáin	154
Inis Bearacháin	1
Inis Treabhair	1
Inse Ghainimh	2
Omey	2
Bere	187
Cléire	125
Dursey	6
Heir	24
Long	5
Sherkin	106
Whiddy	22
Fenit	8



## Inishbofin worked overtime while economy boomed

- CDP Co-Ordinator Simon Murray on sustaining island life

Simon Murray is Project Co-Ordinator of Inishbofin CDP, bred, born and reared an Inishbofin man and having been a volunteer all his life. While the economy was going at full steam, Inishbofin CDP worked around the clock with partners on everything from childcare development to an airport for the island. At national level, Simon is currently chairperson of the islands body Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann and chairperson of the new Leader Company for the Islands, Comhar na nOileán Teo. He says the establishment of a dedicated section dealing with islands, now housed within the Department of Community, Rural and Gaelacht Affairs was one of the greatest breakthroughs, particularly for English-speaking islands:

"We needed an islands section in some or other Government department: a specific, dedicated islands section staffed by civil servants. It had to be one that recognised island needs regardless of what language the islanders spoke. In fairness to Minister Ó Cuív, after our many years lobbying, he got it going.

"The islands section was set up in 1997 and now we can go to one section and the staff there, in turn, co-ordinate with other departments on issues such as childcare, farming, fisheries, infrastructure and community projects.

"The capital for the islands section started off as €1million in 1997 and today it stands at €27 million (of which €5m to €6m goes on subsidies for vital air and ferry services). Unfortunately, it will be substantially cut with this budget.

"Access is a lifeline service – not just your own access, but for goods and services. It's been accepted that you cannot just drop an island because it has a small population. A fella slagged me last year about our ferry being subsidised. I informed him, 'Every bus, train and internal domestic flight you go on is heavily subsidised as well. God knows what Dublin Bus get.' So, it's all relative.

**"You cannot just drop an island because it has a small population"**

"The Islands Section's capital funding has paid for our pier here, our airstrip, coastal protection works and similar projects on all islands. Without the Islands Section and their annual core budget what we have achieved in the last ten years would have taken a lifetime. We can get up to 80% of the capital funding for our community-based projects. The only problem with 80% grants is that it leaves it to the community to raise 20% of funds, which is a lot for a couple of hundred people or less. Nonetheless, we raised €30,000 for the football pitch and €45,000 for the community centre.

"The Community Services Programme (CSP) has just started which is great because it means more staff to work on specific targeted areas, identified under the CDP, for development.

"But, Community Development should come with a severe health warning like on the cigarette packs. We'd want four people in this office. We're a one-stop shop for everything on the island as the state and its services, in the main, stop at the mainland. We cover everything from agricultural forms, health care, childcare, afterschool, infrastructure, training,



# Pat Coyne: Volunteer

There are seven members of the Voluntary Management Committee of Inishbofin CDP.

"I could talk Community Development all night," says Pat Coyne who has been a volunteer with the project for 14 years.

"Take older people. We had to do something for them. We now have a worker assigned to work with the elderly for 20 hours per week. That should make a difference for the elderly at least."

"We're an English-speaking island and when we started developing our community we had to do everything ourselves, unlike the Gaeltacht islands who had Udaras for support.

"The secret of our success on Inishbofin is that nearly everything on the island is owned by the islanders."



## 33 islands speak as one

The Irish Islands Federation, or Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann, is the representative body for the inhabited offshore islands of Ireland. It is the voice of island communities. Its aim is to support sustainable, permanent communities on the islands. It currently has 33 member islands, with populations from just one person to 824 (Inis Mór).

"Comhdháil", as it is referred to in conversation, operated the last Leader programme, the RSS and Comhdháil's day-to-day operations.

Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann are based on Inis Oírr, Árann, Co. na Gaillimhe. T: 099-75096. E: eolas@oileain.ie The manager is Majella Ní Chríocháin. The company has a great website, complete with up-to-date newsletter: [www.oileain.ie](http://www.oileain.ie)

**Most CDPs don't have to oversee the building of new piers, dredging of boating channels, construction of airstrips and the replacement of roads that fall into the sea. It seems disconnected to the struggle for greater social inclusion.**

**But if life on Ireland's offshore islands is to be sustained, then infrastructural development is key. Six English-speaking offshore islands receive funding through the Community Development Programme and as one project co-ordinator, Simon Murray, says, "The Community Development Programme provides the heartbeat in Inishbofin."**

## Mandated Action

"An example of Comhdháil's work was lobbying Fáilte Ireland which used to funnel tourists mostly to the Inis Mór. It took a lot of campaigning, but all the islands are now marketed together. I believe the water wears the stone.

Inishbofin now has three hotels, a hostel, self-catering and B+B's and an 80% repeat custom."

## Identifying Local Needs

"We need to concentrate on more jobs here now, but we need more childcare to make all the jobs accessible, especially to women.

It will cost around €460,000 but we need to upgrade our childcare to be a full-day facility, to allow women to work full-time. It's just playgroup sessions, as our funding allows, from 9.15am to 1pm. We take children at 18 months, but we need to be able to take them in from 6 months and offer a service that can keep the children for the full day.

"You have to build the capacity for the future. The funders look at our existing needs, but my argument is that two adults could move in here tomorrow with five kids and then what do you do?"

"In upgrading the facility, that will also create three-to-four new full-time jobs. We did a childcare course under the FETAC system four years ago, so we have a core-qualified staff.

"The level of work we do is not recognised in the annual budget. There is no group on this island that we do not include and we have so much planned for our future. The Community Development Programme provides the heartbeat in Inishbofin now, everything is driven by it. This is not just a job, this is a passion, this is our future. People have lived on Inishbofin for over 7,000 years and its not going to fold on our watch."

**\* Simon Murray spoke in an interview with Allen Meagher.**



education to the Island Development Plan. Margaret (the administrator) and I are full-time full-time. We have been crazy busy for the past five years, mostly with crucial infrastructural work. The money was there, and in 2003 I reckoned we had three good years left and that it wasn't going to last so we worked hard. Now, we've the airstrip built, a new pier and a coastal road, football pitch, community centre, playground, internal road network and many smaller projects as well.

## Accountability

"I am responsible for the CE scheme, the JI, and the Rural Social Scheme, the childcare programme - around 12 employees, the running of three companies, a co-op and a few more bits. I'm also responsible, as Chairperson of Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann, for about 33 staff between Leader, Comhdháil and RSS.

"When I was chairperson of the Voluntary Management Committee of the CDP, I was very much a hands-on chairperson, I'd call in twice a week. I felt it was the chairperson's responsibility to have a full working knowledge and I was 80% on top of everything. Not all chairpersons operate that way, some are more devolved.

"Five years ago, I was accepted for the job as Co-Ordinator and I was able to get going straight away; I knew all the main players already and I also knew the financial clock was ticking."

**"Community Development should come with a severe health warning like on the cigarette packs"**

## The National Picture

### Community Service Programme funds 325 organisations

The Community Services Programme (CSP) supports 325 community, businesses and social enterprises to deliver local services and employment opportunities for particularly disadvantaged groups around the State. Last year, €52million was spent on the CSP.

The Programme provides employment, full and part-time, to over 1,660 people. It funds projects that look after the likes of house maintenance and homecare for elderly and disabled people, management of community centres, garden maintenance, businesses employing disabled people and recovering substance abusers and much more.

The CSP is the successor programme (since January, 2006) to the Social Economy Programme previously managed by FAS.

The CSP is funded under the National Development Plan 2007-2013, the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs is the lead government department and Pobal manages the programme on the Department's behalf.

Applications for CSP funding are handled primarily by Area-based Partnerships, Community Partnerships and LEADER companies. The call for applications has now closed for this year.

More information: [www.pobal.ie](http://www.pobal.ie)



Every community development worker should consider visiting an island supported by the Community Development Programme. Take your choice: Inishbofin, Co. Galway, Inishturk, Clare Island and Achill Island in Co. Mayo and Bere Island and Sherkin Island in Co. Cork. You'll find the contact details for every CDP in the country at [www.changingireland.ie/CDPcontacts.htm](http://www.changingireland.ie/CDPcontacts.htm)



*Richard Spelman in the South Atlantic.*

### Six new workers in Inishbofin

Six months into the job and Richard Spelman, the manager of the Community Services Programme (CSP) on Inishbofin, is loving it. Inishbofin CDP got the ball rolling two years ago by submitting a strong business development plan and now there are six new staff aboard under the CSP.

As far as Richard is concerned, islands are king.

"Before this, I worked on another island, Dominica, in the Caribbean. Population 40,000."

"In community development?"

"No, I was project officer for a commercial building company."

In fact, Richard's background is most suited for community development work in a place where infrastructural projects are as important as social initiatives.

"Before that I spent six months on Saint Helena," added Richard. Saint Helena is one of the most isolated places in the world. There is no airport and you have to travel to the island by ship. As a result, Richard had to stop over for a couple of months on Ascension Island, a military base in the ocean.

"I've been to most of the inhabited islands of Ireland, though I've still to get around to Tory and Rathlin... I love islands. Hey, I feel like I'm showing off now."

So what makes our English-speaking offshore islands tick? The CDPs of course and the projects they drive and oversee, such as the CSP work plan. Inishbofin's CSP work plan is really crucial to the further development of certain areas, as Richard explained.

### Inclusion

He now has five work colleagues to promote greater social inclusion - a Mini-Bus Driver (to transport schoolchildren and who ever needs it, as well as tourists), a Community Centre Supervisor, a Research and Communication Worker, an Arts and Tourism Development Worker and a Community Care Worker.

### Community Voice

The CDP currently broadcasts one day a week on FORUM's Community Radio from the recording studio in Inishbofin Community Centre (first Island to have its own Radio Studio), so the communications officer will not be stuck for facilities.

The Centre will open for longer hours from now on - due to the Supervisor's appointment - and will open at weekends. This is especially important in the long and dark winter evenings. The Centre boasts an indoor hall where you'll find everything from Sean Nos dancing to badminton, soccer and gigs by the Hothouse Flowers. (The Flowers played in May at Inishbofin's three-day Arts Festival, which has been running since 1976).

### Change

Every islander should notice some positive change, but particularly people with disabilities, older people and children will find there is more for them to do.

"It's been a challenge to get the Programme up and running" smiles Richard. "The real work begins now."



## Project helped Inishturk win All-Ireland - a first for the Community Development Programme



*Inishturk footballers. Photo: Séamus Ó Cnámhisi.*

All-Irelands don't often come to Mayo and it is very rare indeed that a Community Development Project can claim some credit for a football win.

However, the roof of the community bar on Inishturk probably needed attention the day after the island emerged victorious from this year's All-Ireland Islands Football championship. Usually, homes on Ireland's furthest offshore island, 14.5km from the mainland, are buffeted by easterly winds, but this summer the roof rose to cries of joy. Inishturk Captain Robert O'Toole's team had won the cup ahead of 13 offshore islands that nurture sufficient populations to field teams.

Although Inishturk CDP cannot claim to have scored the points, the CDP did play a crucial role. The pitch the team trained on and the club they celebrated in exist thanks to the work of volunteers and staff, past and present, in the CDP.

The community centre, or club, or pub (it is all three) is the hub of the community and was built in 1991. It has seen its share of parties over the years, with President Mary McAleese celebrating her birthday there two years ago.

### Lobbied For Pitch Grant

The CDP lobbied for the funds to improve the football pitch and, in September of last year, Minister Éamon Ó Cuív sanctioned a grant of €169,526 for the work.

Football aside, the CDP considers the development of the piers and the roads "our greatest achievements" in recent years. So says chairperson Anne O'Toole and I wouldn't argue with her.

On my first visit to Inishturk - to report on the launch of the island's first tourism

brochure in 1995 - I climbed from a trawler into a waiting currach to land on the island. Great fun when you're young and it's summertime, but no help if you are gaining in years and the weather is wintery and wild. Now, the island is accessible to everyone.

Other connections have also improved. The neighbouring islands of Turk, Bofin and Clare - each of which has a CDP - banded together in 2005 and established a broadband connection. This infrastructure enhances the islands' employment potential and has social value too. Parents, for example, chat via broadband with their teenage children who attend boarding schools on the mainland. While many rural projects nationwide are working to this day to have their communities connected, the islands have gone ahead.

## Environment

Meanwhile, in this year's Tidy Town's Competition, Inishturk earned 236 points. For every point scored, volunteers spent time clearing rusting old farm machinery out of the way and beautifying the place.

"We recycle everything we can. We don't burn rubbish, it all goes into skips and bottle-banks," said Anne. "Most people who visit the island think it's a great place - uncommercialised and at one with nature."

However, unemployment is a big issue, especially for women, and the challenge is to make life sustainable for everyone.

"The girls don't go for the fishing and they have to leave. The population is dwindling and school numbers are down to ten national school children," said Anne. "If only I had a magic wand..."

The CDP's co-ordinator, Mary Catherine Heanue, and administrator, Mary O'Toole, organise courses to increase people's



*Fisherman Bill Heanue.*

employment prospects and also to encourage a more sustainable way of living. For instance, a dozen people participated in a course on organic gardening. The project also runs courses on using the internet, first aid, cookery and social care. In addition, the project gives advice to residents seeking grants of various types.

"If the CDP staff weren't here, much more time would need to be spent by the voluntary committee members," said Anne.

## 'A Safe Bet For Funders'

On my visit, I sat in as the CDP staff and volunteers met for the last time officially with representatives from West Training Support Agency. The venue was the meeting room/pool-room in the community centre/pub where the walls are lined with photographs of the islands' people and events, past and present.

"We are losing an awful lot in losing West Training," noted Anne, as the support agency's co-ordinator, Breda Lymer, guided the Inishturk board through company law, employment procedures, workplace health and safety obligations, and equality laws.

Breda commented: "The roles and responsibilities placed on you as directors are the same as if you were directors of a big company. It's daunting, but very important work."

She praised the committee members for playing "a very valuable role" because the CDP's structure as a limited company "means that you are a safe bet for funders." The CDP's work was "crucial to the island's development," she added.

The football win proved to be a unique case in point.

Finally, while all was calm the night I visited, if you think an island with a population of around 60 isn't really up to raising the roof, you should check out "A quiet night on Inishturk" on youtube.com to see for yourself.

For more information on how the islands established their broadband connection, check out our report in Issue 15, available at: [www.changingireland.ie/archive.html](http://www.changingireland.ie/archive.html)

## Greatest challenge: jobs

The greatest challenge facing Inishturk and other islands with small populations is finding work. Children move away from home for their secondary schooling and - unless employment is available when they complete their education - they do not return, except on visits.

As one local boatman put it: "Unless we can find them work, they are lost to us as parents once they hit 11 or 12."

## 750,000 affected by poverty nationwide

### Stone unveiled to mark UN day

Those who know poverty and discrimination don't often get the chance to directly have their say and explain their daily struggle for a better life. October 17th is different.

Each year, people gather on the quayside in Dublin to speak about their lives in front of supporters and the media.

Homeless people, mothers whose children were denied schooling and people who live with poverty in their day-to-day lives took turns once again this year to have their say on the UN's International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

Across the country, CDPs and community organisations marked the day with eye-catching events that involve those in poverty or facing discrimination.

This year, for instance, the CDP in Thurles produced a film documentary (see below).

At the 2008 commemoration in Dublin, a World Poverty Commemorative Stone, crafted by artist Stuart McGrath was unveiled on Custom House Quay.

The stone, situated near the famine statues

bears the message in English, Irish and French: "Wherever men and women are condemned to live in poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights are respected is our solemn duty."

The work was a collaborative effort undertaken by The 17th October Group, a coalition of over 25 anti-poverty community groups and NGOs (including 'Changing Ireland') and Dublin City Council and the Dublin Docklands Development Authority. This year, events also took place in Arklow, Thurles, Shannon, Tipperary Town, Rosmuc, Letterkenny, Blanchardstown, and Belfast.

"Poverty levels here are still among the highest in Europe despite now being one of the richest countries," said Stuart Williams of ATD Fourth World, who helped co-ordinate October 17th events nationwide. "There are 750,000 people in Ireland affected by poverty, a third of whom are children. And one third of all children in disadvantaged areas have serious difficulties with their reading and writing."

ATD Fourth World, founded in France in 1957, has a grass-roots presence in 30 countries.

### Thurles anti-poverty movie

Thurles Action for Community Development have produced a short Combat Poverty Agency funded documentary to highlight the 17th of October as the UN Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

"The whole town is talking about us," said Breda Ryan, project co-ordinator.

The 30-minute documentary was produced by local people and highlights views on poverty by people on the street and by members of the Cabinet. It was one of a number of events held in Ireland to highlight the 17th of October.

The documentary was a culmination of work carried out over the past few months by local CDP volunteers and the multi-media department of Tipperary Institute.

Street interviews were carried out around Thurles to discover local people's opinion of poverty. Interviews were also held with a number of people who work with socially excluded persons and with Mary Hanafin,

Minister for Social and Family Affairs and Máire Hootner, Minister with Responsibility for Older people.

For more information, contact: Evelyn O'Rourke, Development Worker, TACD, Kickham St., Thurles, Co. Tipperary. T: 0504-90666.

### Curran announces 8 projects to tackle drugs in Limerick

John Curran, Minister of State at the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, met on September 3rd with community representatives from eight projects - most of them new - set up to tackle drug misuse in Limerick City.

His visit marked the release of nearly €900,000 for the eight projects. They cover the areas of treatment, rehabilitation, family support, prevention and education and outreach to vulnerable drug misusers and their work will be overseen by the Mid-West Regional Drugs Task Force (MWRDTF).



Minister of State Curran (pictured above with drugs worker Anita McNamara and hairdresser Shona Griffin after a visit to 'Changing Ireland's office') said: "This is an indication of both the Government's and my Department's commitment to the regeneration of Limerick City... This funding will help local communities worst affected by the drugs and crime in Limerick City to develop local responses to help the most vulnerable people in these communities."

The recipient projects are: In the Know Project, Limerick City Community Based Drugs Initiative, Aljeff Transitional Programme, Aljeff Outreach, Aljeff Day Programme, Northside We're Ok Youth Initiative, Northstar Family Support Project, and Limerick City Sub-Group of the MWRDTF.



Helen Duffy from Moyross speaking at the October 17th event.



## “People underestimate the primal drive of identity”

### - The Irish language takes off in Corduff

Monica Uí Sionnáin reports



“People underestimate the primal drive of identity,” says Corduff CDP development worker, Monica Uí Sionnáin, who along with her ‘cúpla-focail’ colleagues is pleasantly flabbergasted at the demand for conversational Irish classes.

Based in Blanchardstown, Dublin, Monica believes the interest in the language is related to the increasing challenge to the Irish identity posed by our more intercultural society. She also credits comedian Des Bishop – one of Ireland’s most famous non-Irish-born people – with helping to boost interest. She suggests other community groups should consider doing what they are doing in Corduff and writes:

“Corduff CDP, which is based in Corduff in Blanchardstown, Dublin, set about putting on conversational Irish classes earlier this year as a pilot project within the local community centre.

While some members of staff have a cúpla focail the fluency is minimal. Over the years, working in the area of community development, we saw many social changes take place within our society, particularly in the Blanchardstown area of Dublin. At times, people in the area would mention about their

culture and the language and our brief is to respond to those needs.

In response, we decided to put on conversational Irish classes and see what the uptake might be. We were totally overwhelmed by the response to the advertising of this both



by poster/flyer and by a press release in the local newspapers.

The Wednesday morning class has been a huge success and was so over-subscribed that we decided to put on evening classes twice a week to meet the demand.

We now have some 50-60 people from the Blanchardstown area on our books. We feel the success and demand for the classes is meeting some need in the people, as we see everyone taking a new pride in themselves, leaving the classes with a smile on their faces.

The class has a broad cross-section of participants, male and female and from all levels of education. We even have a grandfather and grandson.

There are two tutors involved, paid by the local Vocational Education Committee. One reason for the courses’ success is that they are delivered in a light-hearted and entertaining manner with no pressure on the participants with regard to exams. The participants are met where they are at.

Being located within the local community centre takes the emphasis away from formal education and makes it all the more accessible, particularly if people have had a bad experience in schools.

The classes have immense potential and we are discussing the possibility of starting a branch of Glór na Gael in the area, which means people would have a place where they can speak Irish. We are optimistic that it will go from strength to strength. It has been one of the most delightfully surprising and successful ventures that we have initiated as a project.

In fairness, Des Bishop has done us all a favour in raising awareness around the language, and no doubt he helped fuel interest in Blanchardstown too. Perhaps we will see a revival of the language nationally. I would encourage projects to try it for themselves – you could be pleasantly surprised.

While no-one from a minority ethnic community has signed up for the classes yet, the door is open to everyone.”

For more information, contact: Corduff CDP, Corduff Community Resource Centre, Blackcourt Road, Corduff, Dublin 15. Chair: Adrienne O’Shea. Co-ordinator: Felix Gallagher. Administrator: Ann Smith. Development worker: Monica Uí Sionnáin. T: 01-8219021. F: 01-8219750. E: [corduffcdpltd@eircom.net](mailto:corduffcdpltd@eircom.net)

## Chorr Dhubh: Ag spreagadh bród úr astu féin

Le Monica Uí Sionnáin

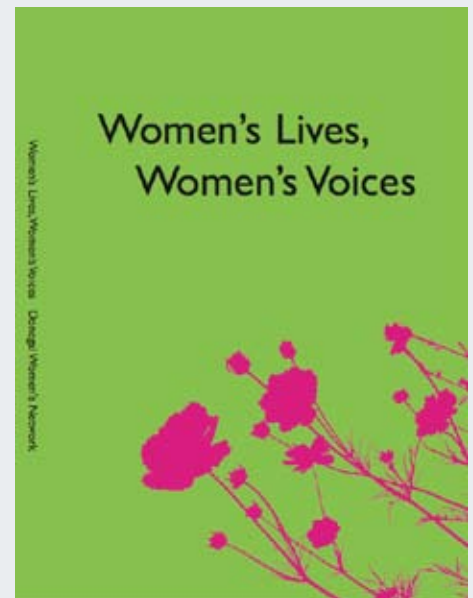
Thug Tionscadal Fhorbairt Pobail na Chorr Dhubh, atá bunaithe sa Chorr Dhubh i mBaile Bhlainséir, faoi ranganna comhrá Gaeilge a chur ar fáil níba luaithe sa bhliain mar Tionscadal pilótach san ionad pobail. Cé go bhfuil cúpla focal ag cuid den fhoireann, níl morán líofacht acu. De réir na mblianta agus muid ag obair i réimse Forbairt Pobail chonaic muid neart athruithe sóisialta sa tsochaí s'againn, go háirithe i gceantar Bhaile Bhlainséir i mBaile Átha Cliath.

Taispeánann muintir na háite suim sa gcultúr agus sa dteanga agus i dtaca leis seo, rinne muid an cinneadh ranganna comhrá Gaeilge a sholáthar leothu. Nach mór an t-iontas a bhí orainn ag an fhreagairt a tugadh ar an fógra agus an preaseisiúint sna nuachtáin áitiúla pobail. Tá ag éirí go breá leis an rang atá ar siúl maidin Dé Chéadaoin agus tá sé ar intinn againn ranganna breise a chur ar siúl chun freastal ar an éileamh do ranganna um thráthnóna.

Tá 50-60 duine ó cheantar Bhaile Bhlainséir cláraithe sna ranganna. Tá sé de bharúil againn go bhfuil na ranganna ag déanamh maitheas do na daoine. Feictear bród úr acu astu féin, ag imeacht ó na ranganna agus gairí lena mbéal. Tá idir

fhir agus mná páirteach sna ranganna, ar gach leibhéal oideachais, idir óg agus aosta. Tá beirt theagascóirí againn, íoctha ag an Choiste Gairmoideachais, a chuireann na ranganna ar fáil. Dar linn, soláthar meidhreath agus siamsúil na ranganna a ba chúis lena mbua, gan bhrú ar rannpháirtithe ó thaobh scrúduithe; ag freastal orthu faoin áit a bhfuil siad.

Ós san ionad pobail a bhíonn siad, baintear an bhéim ó oideachas foirmiúil, agus fágtar teacht níos fearr ar an teanga, go háirithe má bhí drochtaithí ar scoil ag daoine. Is dóigh linn go bhfuil an oiread sin cumais ag na ranganna go bhfuil muid ag plé le brainse Ghlór na nGael a thosú sa cheantar, a chuirfeadh suíomh ar fáil do dhaoine ar mhaith leo a gcuid Ghaeilge a chleachtadh. Tá suíl againn go rachaidh sé ó neart go neart. Tá sé ar cheann de na fiontair is rathúla agus is aoibhne a thosaigh muid mar thionscadal. Is dóigh liom go bhfuil neart déanta ag Des Bishop lefeasacht a spreagradh maidir leis an teanga, agus níl amhras ann gur chuidigh sé leis an tionscnamh s'againn féin a mhúscailt. B'fhéidir go bhfeicfidh muid athbheochan den chineál céanna. Seans go mbainfí deagheith as aibh!



## Donegal women turn to publishing

Donegal Women's Network have published a book 'Women's Lives, Women's Voices' to mark their 10th anniversary.

For the past six years, a wide range of Donegal women – supported through the work of the Network – have been writing about their lives in the 'Women's Lives, Women's Voices' column of the Donegal Democrat.

The book received recognition from President Mary McAleese, who wrote, "It is a fitting tribute to the women of Donegal and gives a wonderful overview of the extraordinary wealth of talents of the women of that splendid county." Donegal VEC and an anonymous donor contributed to the publishing costs.

'Women's Lives, Women's Voices' costs €7.50 and is available from Pobail le Chéile or Donegal Women's Network, T: 074-913-2023. Postage €2.





# Human Rights & Community Development

Rose Conway Walsh is the project co-ordinator of Erris le Chéile CDP based in Belmullet, Co. Mayo. She was one of the participants on the Human Rights in the Community Programme organised by Amnesty International, CAN and Ballymun Community Law Centre. It was run in conjunction with Mayo Women's Support Services and took place over 10 days during a six-month period in Castlebar.

The programme was designed as a capacity building strategy for community workers and individuals to become more effective and strategic in their response to the violations and infringements of various rights in their communities.

The time out from the day to day pressures of Community Development gave Rose an opportunity to examine some of the concerns and questions she has long held about how we work in our own local communities and how we work collectively.

Rose did not write this article to be critical of people working the Community Sector: "I am acutely aware of the Trojan work that is done in communities all over this country by people who make great personal sacrifices and are completely burnt out trying to fight the system and improve the lives of vulnerable people. I just want us to look at where we are going."

We all have wonderful mission statements which include things like: "We strive to bring about social change and empower people who are most marginalised in our communities." But how much of our time is spent on the social change aspect and how many extremely marginalised people become aware of their personal power as a result of our work with them? We all saw what Ghandi achieved when he made people see the collective power they had to change things.

I believe there are multiplicities of reasons why we sometimes fail in our attempts to bring about long-term social change. These range from:

- our own limited capacity to work from a human rights perspective
- our reluctance to honestly examine our work practices
- the low priority of collective action
- our tendency to do everything right rather than do the right thing
- fear of upsetting the status quo
- fear of losing funding
- blind acceptance of existing structures
- reluctance to get involved in the decision making systems.

## FUNDING

Annual funding allocations discourage strategic planning. Not knowing what next year's budgets are going to be does not allow for innovative planning. At least three-year funding is required to enable the proper planning and implementation required to bring about social change.

## VALUE FOR MONEY

Of course we also have a responsibility to deliver value for money in terms of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. But the inability of anyone to come up with a suitable measurement programme has caused many very positive outcomes to be discounted and lower priority to be given to less easily measured activities. In these circumstances short-term thinking is encouraged in an effort

to satisfy measures taken on an annual basis. I would argue that this in turn leads to a reduction in initiative or innovation.

## LACK OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

We have hundreds of Community Development Projects, Partnerships, Statutory agencies and other groups supporting disadvantaged individuals and communities in this country. So why is there so little working together to identify strategic actions and collectively bring about social change? Rather than it being the lack of resources, skills, confidence or experience, I would say it is more to do with our fear of not being able to maintain positive relationships with the key decision makers on the issues we are trying to tackle.

## UNDERSTANDING HUMAN RIGHTS

In order to build our capacity to become more effective in tackling violations of Human Rights, I believe it should be mandatory for all community workers and volunteers to do Human Rights training with annual refresher programmes. This would make a significant difference to our approach to community development and give us the confidence to work from a Human Rights perspective. This would take a substantial human resource investment, but it would ensure the empowerment of marginalised citizens, thus increasing their individual contribution to households and communities.

## POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

Our current political system is designed to keep people disempowered. Instead of legislating to change the systems so that individuals can directly access what they are entitled to, most politicians will just 'grant the favour'. Thereafter, they assume entitlement of that persons vote.

The question for us is: are we wasting our time making submissions to politicians who depend for votes on a disempowered nation?

Unless a critical mass of people with



Will we be able to say  
"We did our best"?

By Rose Conway Walsh

genuine human rights and community development principles get elected things are never going to change.

## SERVICE PROVIDERS V SOCIAL CHANGE

Have we too become service providers who blindly implement the will of the institutions that we depend on for funding? Is it easier to keep your head down and not rock the boat? Well that's ok but at least let us be honest about it. Let's drop the 'social change' pretence and just continue to treat the symptoms. I believe some of the injustices that are happening right under our noses today are the tribunals and scandals of the future. Will we be able to say "We did our best"?

**To quote Eleanor Roosevelt, Human Rights Activist and former US First Lady:**

"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? ... in the neighbourhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works.

"Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world."

## One day in Erris

Allen Meagher reports from North Mayo

Shell – the main company in the consortium developing the Corrib gas field 83 km off the Mayo coast – could be forgiven for thinking that – from day one – there must have been something funny in the water affecting the locals in Erris. Why else would there be such consternation since their arrival to provide jobs, energy and investment in one of the most disadvantaged rural areas in Ireland?



Corrib Gas refinery site.

Apart from CCTV in a rural area, the landscape seemed at first to be largely unchanged from my last visit to the area as a local reporter in 1995. But, beneath the surface – literally – I was soon to learn the removal of bog has led to the pollution with aluminium of the nearby freshwater lake that supplies drinking water to the 10,000 strong local population. Now there really is something in the water than could effect people's health.

At first, it sounded like a dream come true for the district. Today, there are jobs, yes, but also mass-arrests, environmental degradation, community conflict, jailings and most recently a hunger-strike. Community undevelopment.

On the day I visited, I barely noticed the small woman sitting quietly in her car outside a fenced Shell compound, Maura Harrington, on the fourth day of her hunger-strike. Somehow or other, her wish to see off the largest pipe-laying vessel in the world, the 'Solitaire', was to come true (the ship needed repairs said Shell, it left through "Divine intervention" said Maura). Had she died, who knows the political outcome.

"Maura is like the devil to hell for Shell," Michael Curley, a campaigner from Porturlin was to tell me that day. However, not everyone in the community is a fan.

An irony of ongoing protests is that the longer the project is delayed, the more valuable the gas is likely to become as world energy markets enter the Peak Oil stage.

## Six years of community anguish ... and Shell jobs

'Changing Ireland' visited Erris in Mayo in early September as tensions ran high in the community: One protester was on day four of a hunger strike and the Irish Navy had just pulled back from the scene. The conflict surrounding the multi-billion euro gas extraction project has been running for six years and is crying out for resolution. Two Ministers, Éamon Ó Cuív and Eamon Ryan, visited in late September and met with every major player in the dispute. One hopes their intervention will lead to progress on the most intractable environmental issue to face any community in Ireland in recent years.



### 'IT'S DIFFICULT TO TALK NOW'

Since 2002, Erris has changed in physical terms and in terms of community. I drove by the peat deposit site at Shramore to the Bellanaboy gas terminal. Private security contractors swung open the heavy metal gates to allow me access and I stopped inside the terminal area to ask for Corrib Gas' PR chief, John Egan. The head security man went into 'No comment' mode apart from saying he



John Egan did not want to talk

would pass my number onto John.

Ten minutes later, John rang, curious to know about the "angle" we would be taking. I said we focussed on Community Development and wished to ask Shell about how it is working towards a successful outcome to the debacle. I began by asking for Shell's views on Maura Harrington's hunger strike.

"It's difficult to talk now, I'm on a train you know, I'll call you back later," said John as the line went down. I left a voice-message but he didn't call back. The 'Western People' complained about a similar experience with him the same week. It seemed the hunger-strike was a PR no-go area for Shell.

Driving on, I took the Pollatomish road towards Glengad where Shell hope to bring the gas ashore, and stopped along the way at the scene of the 2003 landslide that swept coffins and human remains from the Pollatomish graveyard into the sea. The original route for the pipeline.

Two miles on, I saw steel palisade fencing on agricultural land leading down to a beach and out into the sea, the pipeline's likely landfall.



# Environment



## COMMUNITY DESTROYED

The beauty and desolation of the area is unmistakeable and Garda vans seem incongruous. Three vans were parked outside the entrance gate to the site with about a dozen Gardai on duty, while private security contractors patrolled inside the compound and on the public beach.

Metres away stood over a dozen environmental campaigners armed with flasks, sandwiches and DVDs to hand out to visitors.

"This is a great place for Community Development - in a negative sense - we've had our community destroyed," said campaigner Terence Conway from Inver.

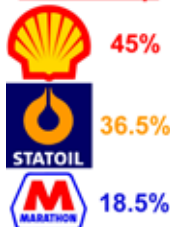
Certainly, the community is in a stressful situation.

The Irish Navy had pulled back only a day earlier and over 40 campaigners were arrested under the Public Order Act over the previous three weeks, though nobody was charged. To add to the drama, the media reported that a British submarine was observing proceedings from offshore.

"When the refinery is finished, the jobs will be gone," lamented Michael Curley.

He could be proven wrong however. In late September, Shell placed a notice in the 'Western People' seeking permission to extend their facilities. If permission is granted, there could be many more jobs to come. In an area of high unemployment and emigration, this is something that most locals may appreciate.

## Corrib Gas ownership



## €1 TRILLION IN OIL AND GAS

Hard to imagine, but a decade from now the Erris area could become a giant industrial landscape. Ireland reportedly holds huge reserves of oil and gas reserves valued at an incredible €1 Trillion off the Western seaboard. It is conceivable that it may all be landed in Erris.

Public opinion has been massaged by both sides, but there is a touch of David versus Goliath to the story. The campaigners have indymedia.ie and a small number of sympathetic journalists on their side. However, media boss Tony O'Reilly (who controls the Irish Independent, Sunday Independent, Sunday Tribune, Irish Star, the Evening Herald, a host of local newspapers and an international stable of newspapers) is one of those with a vested interest. He has invested in oil and gas drilling off Clare and Kerry and his newspapers' coverage of the Erris saga relects his wider business interests.

Opinions change and some people in Erris have changed sides. Michael knows one campaigner who used to work as a security worker. At the same time, he did not deny that at least one campaigner now works with Shell.

As I was taking notes, a radio was turned up. John Egan was talking to Mid-West Radio, dismissing claims of "daylight robbery" over the Government's giving away of the gas reserves to Shell. He was also asked about the aluminium-contaminated water and about the lobster-fishermen who refused to move their pots to allow the pipeline come in. He said the fishermen were "trying to frustrate us" and assured people that water coming from the refinery process would be of the highest quality.

"Sure we'll be bottling it," said one of the men leaning over the radio.

The hunger-strike was not mentioned, presumably by pre-agreement.

## SAFE PROCESSING

Terence returned to deal with my queries: "The problem from day one has been the location of the refinery and this is the only place on earth where a company is going to refine gas on a bog, in the middle of a community and next to the source of drinking water for the local catchment area."

For the same amount of money Shell makes in profit in one week, €65 million, says Terence, the gas could be safely processed offshore. Most campaigners are however open to the idea of onshore processing if it was conducted in another (safer) location and an alternative at Glinsk has been pushed by local priests.

There are also concerns about the erosion of community.

"It's something like the Civil War - people are only just about speaking to each other here. Shell have tried to divide the community, but we'll work to heal what they destroyed. And the real problem is corrupt Government," said Terence.

He added: "We want to convince the Government to stop this disaster and to develop the resources of the country for the

*(Cont'd over)*



Campaigners Maura Harrington and Pat O'Donnell.

people of the country as cleanly as possible.”

Next up, a jeep arrived on the scene driven by Pat O'Donnell, the lobster-fisherman who has declined to move his pots out of Shell's way. Not put off by repeat arrests (under what he says is an abuse of the Public Order Act) while he tended to his pots, Pat says he has one thing on his side and oddly enough - given his experience of policing in the area - it is the law. Pat's pots cannot be interfered with as the law stands. This may have had as much to do with the 'Solitaire' withdrawing from the area as Maura's hunger-strike or the "accident" that happened the pipe-laying vessel.

#### ON THE PLUS SIDE

“The community will not heal for a



generation. There's been too much hurt,” said the 51-year-old.

#### Ed Collins was hurt

Surprisingly, the conflict has not stopped Pat talking to people: “I talk to everyone, even John Egan. I talked to him last week to ask for an apology.”

He said that on the plus side, he had “made greater friends in the last three years than you could ever imagine.” He said he “didn't know such strong people existed” before the campaign started.

One of the best-known campaigners is Maura. She is advocating on the national issue of oil and gas “robbery”, whereby exploration companies supposedly get the best deals in the world here in Ireland.

I didn't speak to her. The doctor had just called to check her health and she had made her message clear - that the “giveaway” of gas

profits should be a national issue. The Corrib Gas field is estimated to yield between €12 billion and €100 billion.

#### NO COMMUNITY GARDAI

Beside the hunger-striker's car, a half-dozen Gardai stood chatting to each other as they lapped up the day's warm sunshine. Over the following day, some of them would be involved in yet again arresting people under the Public Order Act.

None of them was a Community Garda. They didn't know if there was a Community Garda in the area and gave me the local station number to call. Apart from that, they were unable to comment. A Community Garda from outside the area who wished to remain anonymous later told me that he was anxious

that new recruits in particular may “pick up bad habits” on postings to Erris.

Back on the campaign ditch, a new man had turned up, one Ed Collins. He took a half hour to tell his story of human rights abuses by Gardai on a particularly violent day in Erris in 2006. His story has been documented by Global Community Monitor and his injuries have seriously affected his health. Ed's experience - dreadful as it is - is not an isolated one. There have been other complaints over Garda harassment of environmental campaigners in Erris.

The situation in Erris is not pretty. Had Shell - if you can imagine this - adopted a Community Development approach to the project, the gas would probably be flowing by now. Sometimes the long road is the fastest road.



## Ministers Ó Cuív and Ryan raise hopes

In late September, Government Ministers Éamon Ó Cuív and Eamon Ryan visited the Erris area and met the campaigners, lobbyists and gas companies for informal talks.

Shell and the environmental campaign groups afterwards expressed their support for the Ministers in their efforts to find a resolution. It marked the first engagement by Government at senior level with those

involved since 2005.

Minister Ó Cuív stressed that he and Minister Ryan were in attendance in “a listening role”.

Local community groups, Pobal Chill Chomáin and Pobal le Chéile said in a statement that the initiative was “acceptance by the Government that there are serious problems surrounding the project that require urgent attention”. They welcomed the Government-level intervention.

The Ministers' next move will be met with interest. For the time being, their visit has at least raised some hope in the local community.

## Erris Le Chéile CDP's position

Erris le Chéile CDP based in Belmullet, Co. Mayo, has made a point of not taking sides in the Corrib Gas dispute. To better understand the project's approach, read 'Keeping the door open in a divided community' (in Issue 22). To read about Erris Le Chéile CDP's work with young people, parents, gay people, and those effected by alcohol and drugs, check out stories in issues 18, 20 and 22: [www.changingireland.ie/archive.html](http://www.changingireland.ie/archive.html)



## Workshops to link with disability activists overseas

Irish people are being encouraged to engage with disability issues affecting people in developing countries. New workshops are focussing on real life stories of people with disabilities from Africa and Latin America.

DESSA – the Disability Equality Support Agency – are running the workshops over October and November. They are chiefly aimed at staff and volunteers in Community Development Projects and Family Resource Centres.

The workshops have been organised to celebrate the coming into force, on May 12th, of the first ever UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

“This was an historic milestone for the disability community worldwide. This Convention cements an international commitment to the realisation of human rights for disabled people,” said Alice Griffin of DESSA. “The workshops will explore easy ways for people to get involved in putting the world to rights. This should act as a pilot to stimulate a longer term and sustainable approach to engaging the community and voluntary sector about disability issues in developing countries.”

The workshops are part of a project called ‘Focussing on Global Disability Rights Issues Initiative’. The project will also produce resource material centered on the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

There are an estimated 600 million people with disabilities worldwide many of whom are excluded from participation in mainstream society. 2007 marked a huge step forward in international awareness on disability and Ireland was instrumental in getting the UN Convention on the international agenda.

DESSA is co-ordinating the workshops and publishing with the Disability Federation Ireland (DFI) and International Service Ireland (ISI) The project is supported by the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs and the Family Support Agency.

Copies of the publication ‘Putting the World to Rights’ will be available at the seminars.

**For further information please contact Alice Griffin, DESSA, Fumbally Court, Fumbally Lane, Dublin 8. T: 01-4163548. F: 01-4536861. E: info@dessa.ie**



## CDPs visit Swaziland and Tanzania

In October, members of Irish NGOs and CDPs visited projects funded by Skillshare in Swaziland, the country with the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence in the world and a severe problem with gender-based violence (GBV).

The Skillshare-supported projects work to reduce gender based violence.

The Irish delegation hoped to build long-term development links. Travellers included staff from Ballybane CDP, Tuam CDP Resource Centre, Tallaght Intercultural Action, Dóchas, Mayo Rape Crisis Centre, Men Overcoming Violence, Access Ireland and the Rape Crisis Network.

Skillshare International Ireland works to reduce poverty, injustice and inequality and to further economic and social development in partnership with people and communities throughout the world.

Meanwhile, in September, staff from a number of CDPs and women's organisations in Ireland returned from a visit to projects in Tanzania. The trip was organised by Banúlacht. Waterford Women's Centre,

Templeshannon CDP in Enniscorthy and Limerick Women's Network were among the CDPs involved.

Community radio journalist Niamh Farren has written a blog and uploaded an audio report about the visit onto Banúlacht's website. It is titled ‘From Dublin to Dar es Salaam: Development Education in Action’. To complete the exchange, four development workers from Tanzania will travel to Ireland next year.

**For more information: [www.banulacht.ie](http://www.banulacht.ie) and [www.skillshare.ie](http://www.skillshare.ie)**

## Trocaire shifts focus to environment

Trocaire, the overseas development agency, has made ‘environmental justice’ one of its core organisational programmes. Trocaire's Lenten campaign earlier this year had climate change as its focus.

Other NGOs are also shifting their focus.

David O'Hare of Trocaire told ‘Changing Ireland’, “We see environmental justice as being of the utmost importance because climate change is undermining the fight against poverty.”

“Developing countries haven't caused global warming but the world's poorest people are left to cope with the consequences. This is because they live in areas that are seeing the biggest impact of global warming, they depend much more on the weather for their livelihood and, and because they are already living in poverty and are less able to cope,” he said.

David continued: “Take Silas Ngera from Tharaka, in Kenya. He is a small-scale farmer but the crops failed last year and his wife ran out of food supplies.” On the positive side, as David explained, Silas is a member of Kamanadi, a farmers co-operative group focussed on sustainable development which is supported by Trocaire.

Trocaire now works with communities to capture and store water, to use more drought-resistant crops and to look at different ways of generating income so they are not solely dependent on agriculture.

**More info: [www.trocaire.ie](http://www.trocaire.ie)**

# TROCAIRE

## UN dates 2008

**Nov 20th – Universal Children's Day**

**Nov 25th – International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women**

**Dec 10th – International Human Rights Day**

**Dec 18th – International Day of Solidarity with Migrants**



“In Irish cities... there is only a couple of days food supply at any given time. In the event of a truckers’ strike or any other emergency the supermarket shelves would empty in a matter of hours.”

## Useful organisations

By Morag Friel



While switching lightbulbs and recycling our waste packaging is a good start, it is just not nearly enough. When you feel you need to know more and become pro-active, it’s hard to know where to start. But here in Ireland you are not alone:

### Dublin Food Growing: Food Security from the Ground Up

In Irish cities, just as in most cities around the world, there is only a couple of days food supply at any given time. In the event of a truckers’ strike or any other emergency the supermarket shelves would empty in a matter of hours.

Set up earlier this year, Dublin Food Growing is a network of people dedicated to increasing food security by encouraging people to grow food in the capitol. The aim is to connect anyone growing food, from the smallest scale (even apartments can have window boxes!) to allotments and community gardens right through to larger-scale market gardens and commercial farms. They are involved with developing food growing projects, advocacy, research, policy, networking and education.

W: [dublinfoodgrowing.org](http://dublinfoodgrowing.org)

E: [dublinfoodgrowing@gmail.com](mailto:dublinfoodgrowing@gmail.com)

### Feasta: the Foundation for the Economics of Sustainability

A think-tank and membership-based environmental organisation Feasta was set up 10 years ago by a group of people dissatisfied with the dominant economic system which demands continual growth, at all costs. Its mission is to explore the economic, cultural and environmental characteristics of a truly sustainable society - and to disseminate this information to the widest relevant audience. Feasta’s opinion on most of the problems faced globally is that they are caused by bad systems and so change needs to happen at a systems’ level.

Most of the work done by Feasta is

by volunteers who come on board with a particular area of interest and then pursue that through discussion, research, conferences and suchlike.

Current areas of work are: energy and climate change, solutions to the present financial crisis, food security, money systems and taxation systems. Information on these can be found on the website. Feasta’s discussion boards, accessed via the website, are a great place to exchange ideas on these and other topics and are open to anyone to join.

W: [www.feasta.org](http://www.feasta.org)

E: [info@feasta.org](mailto:info@feasta.org)

### Community Supported Agriculture

Joining an ecovillage project is not for everyone and there are lots of ways that the principles of an ecovillage can be brought into existing communities. One way would be to start a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) farm.

In Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary, members of the Village have joined forces with the local community to start a CSA. They have hired a farmer and rent land in 3 different locations in the locality to produce as much food as possible. Members of the CSA make regular financial contributions to the farm which is their share in the start up and running costs for the operation. Next Spring, they will begin planting.

A CSA differs from a box scheme in that the members take a share in both the benefits and the risks. It means we become more conscious of what we are eating, much more than if we just buy food from someone else without really knowing its origins. It’s the next best thing to physically growing our own. Also, as members one has the right to input into the scheme in different ways and to have one’s opinion taken on board.

Looking at the bigger picture, CSAs promote food security in a local area and by concentrating on what grows well locally and by being able to adapt readily we can mitigate against at least some of the effects of climate change.

Cloughjordan CSA Contact: Pat Malone  
087-133 8139.

For general info on Community Shared Agriculture: [www.soilassociation.org/csa](http://www.soilassociation.org/csa)



## Even more useful organisations

### [www.cultivate.ie](http://www.cultivate.ie)

This organisation is responding to energy vulnerability and climate change by providing access to the knowledge and tools to cultivate sustainable lifestyles and resilient communities.

### [www.icarus.nuim.ie](http://www.icarus.nuim.ie)

The Irish Climate Analysis and Research Unit (ICARUS) was established to improve our scientific understanding of climate change and its impacts on Ireland.

### [www.foe.ie](http://www.foe.ie)

Friends of the Earth campaigns for environmental justice and sustainability.

### [www.sei.ie](http://www.sei.ie)

Don’t build anything without checking out Sustainable Energy Ireland grants and recommended building approaches.

### [www.sustainable.ie](http://www.sustainable.ie)

Sustainable Ireland’s website is a links-website connected to the Cultivate Centre, Powerdown Community, FEASTA, The Village, GM-Free Ireland, Sustainability, IDEA and Stop Climate Chaos.

### [www.sustainability.ie](http://www.sustainability.ie)

The Sustainability Institute is the parent organisation that publishes ‘Sustainability’ magazine.

### [www.comharsdc.ie](http://www.comharsdc.ie)

The Sustainable Development Council describes itself as “the forum for national consultation and dialogue on all issues relating to sustainable development.”

The Comhar SDC 2008 Annual Conference will take place in the Radisson Hotel, Stephens Street, Dublin 2 on the 11th and 12th November 2008. The theme is ‘Implementing Sustainable Development: Empowering Local Communities.’

### [www.zone5.org](http://www.zone5.org)

A blogger-style website that describes itself as “on the edge between Nature and Culture”.



# Bodies In Ireland



## Change your community in 12 hours

- with an Environmental Action Team

Global Action Plan (GAP) believes that small actions locally can lead to big change globally and 17 countries, including Ireland, are now involved. Any community can take on a Global Action Plan (GAP) and it offers practical solutions to everyday environmental problems.

GAP's main community programme is the 'Environmental Action Team' and it is aimed at adults. Action Teams consist of people recruited from the local community, often neighbours from the same area. There are usually 10 people per Action Team who operate with the support of a trained Action Team leader.

During 12-14 hours of workshops, participants learn about changing their behaviour to become more aware of sustainable approaches to waste, shopping, energy, transport and water. Positive, achievable environmental actions are taken as part of each workshop.

No formal education is needed to take part in an Action Team, just life experience.

Afterwards, Action Team members can meet experts to see how they can lead their community to make it a cleaner, better place to live. The members can also go on to work as team leaders and lead new teams of their own. Team leaders get paid 500 for each team they lead.

A formal education is not necessary to become a team leader. All that's needed is a strong sense of commitment, good people skills and the ability to inspire. Team leaders are supported and trained over two half-day sessions by GAP.

## Gap In Ireland

GAP's work in Ireland has concentrated in Ballymun over the last four years, involving over 2000 Ballymun school-children and helping the area to a Tidy Town's win. On the GAP website you can view their video on 'Ballymun's Journey to Tidy Towns' and also

a video on 'Empowering Communities To Take Action'.

Outside Dublin, GAP is strong in Cork City and County. Since the launch of the GAP programme in 2003, it has run in Bantry, Cobh, Macroom, Mallow, Midleton, Youghal, Bere Island and in Mayfield, Mahon and Knocknaheeny in the City.

This year, Global Action Plan expanded their programmes into Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown area and have started projects in the Loughlinstown and Shanganagh areas.

## Easy To Get Started

GAP are ready to work with local community groups all over Ireland. For more information, check out the "Projects" section of their website.

**To set up programmes in your local area, contact Ian or Lynn in the GAP office: Global Action Plan, 27 Shangan Road, Ballymun, Dublin 9. T: 01-8625846. F: 01-862 0989.**

**E: [info@globalactionplan.ie](mailto:info@globalactionplan.ie)**

**W: [www.globalactionplan.ie](http://www.globalactionplan.ie)**



## 1000 communities still to join Green Schools

Green Flags fly proudly in front of 1300 schools in Ireland today. They signal a school's success in achieving the standards set by the Green Schools Programme which is an international initiative involving students learning about the importance of environmental issues and how to tackle them in their school and home lives.

The Green Schools was launched in Ireland in 1997 and now over 2,900 schools participate, representing 70% of all the schools in the country.

Community groups can encourage



participation. There are currently around 1000 communities with schools that have yet to join the Green Schools Programme. Local community organisations should encourage school boards to get involved as the Programme promises to:

- Improve the school environment,
- Reduce litter,
- Reduce fuel bills,
- Increase environmental awareness,
- Involve the local community,
- Gain local publicity,
- Create links with other schools in Ireland and abroad.

## 7-Step Programme

The seven steps of the Green Schools Programme are: establishing a Green-Schools committee, an environmental review, an action plan, monitoring and evaluation, curriculum work, informing and involving, and a green code. The Green Schools Programme is administered by An Taisce Education.

For more information: [www.antaisce.org/education/green-schools](http://www.antaisce.org/education/green-schools) and [www.greenschoolsireland.org](http://www.greenschoolsireland.org)

## 'Healthy Food for All' in 11 counties

The Healthy Food for All organisation is active in 11 counties and it aims to end food poverty on the island of Ireland.

Projects linked to the Healthy Food For All organisation are located in Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal, Galway, Cork (Bantry and Knocknaheeny), Limerick, Longford, Westmeath, Laois, Offaly and Kildare.

Projects recognised as Community Food Initiatives (CFIs) include community gardens, community cafes, food co-ops, food banks, markets, school meal schemes, nutrition education and training schemes. For example, the 'Growing in Confidence' food project in the North-West is recognised by the organisation.

Healthy Food for All is a multiagency initiative and was established in 2004 based on the findings of a research report 'Food Poverty and Policy' published that year by Combat Poverty, Crosscare and St Vincent de Paul.

For more information:

W: [www.healthyfoodforall.com](http://www.healthyfoodforall.com)

E: [info@healthyfoodforall.com](mailto:info@healthyfoodforall.com)

T: 01-8360011.



# Budget impacts on Community Sector

The Combat Poverty Agency (CPA) an independent voice on poverty that receives Government-funding, is among the agencies affected in the recent budget.

The CPA and the Office of Social Inclusion (OSI) are to be incorporated into the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

Prior to the budget, widespread concern was expressed by organisations in the

Community and voluntary sector that Combat Poverty would lose its voice if subsumed into a Government department.

Minister Mary Hanafin argued on budget day that the amalgamation of the CPA with the OSI will mean "a stronger voice for those affected by poverty and social inclusion issues."

Meanwhile, the Equality Authority and the Human Rights Commission were not forced to merge, as had been originally proposed. The bodies have instead been asked to share "back office and administrative services" and to slash spending.

In reaction, the Equality Rights Alliance (ERA) - a newly-formed lobby group

representing over 60 civil society organisations - welcomed the fact that the bodies were not merged, but lashed the spending cuts. Spokesperson Edel Hackett said the "savage budget cuts of 43% for the Equality Authority and 24% for the Human Rights Commission totally undermines the protection of equality and rights for everyone, particularly the most vulnerable."

Many local community organisations have joined the ERA which says it represents "nearly 3 million people including women, older people, carers, people with disabilities, children, workers, immigrants, Travellers and gay, lesbian and bi-sexual people and many others."



## Recycle cardboard and ride out the recession!

In recessionary times, innovation is the key to survival. As part of our service to community organisations nationwide (and indeed the banking sector) we are unveiling the latest in cardboard technology.

With technical advice and support from Horace McDermott, 'Changing Ireland's agony uncle' (and one-time community development worker) we have developed a range of new products that are easy on the environment, don't hurt the pocket and can be assembled in a half-day.

All you need is cardboard, sellotape and a powerful imagination and, by 5pm today, you and your staff can enjoy the comforts of a new-look office, refitted with new desks, chairs, computers, phones and a comfortable staff canteen (window optional). You might as well go for the fridge as well if you've enough cardboard. Kindly study our product models in the accompanying photographs for guidance.



"We never really looked into recycling before this,"

said Horace McDermott.



"We've piloted all these products in Ballybog and they give your office a whole new look," reported Horace. "We never really looked into recycling before this. Now everyone is talking about us."

As news of our new cardboard technology spreads, Ireland's banks have reportedly begun to hoard cardboard and hope to replace all their computers and phones (and financial analysts) with cardboard cutouts shortly.

"We need to adjust our expectations in the West and to put more effort into recycling," said senior banker Gissa Yourou.