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Community Activists Pulling Down Anti-Traveller Sites



Anti-racism & critical debate



Congratulations to the community workers and others who complained to Facebook en masse and had two racist hate sites shut down recently.

It is an irony because community workers in Ireland began to network online in a big way just last year with the arrival of recession. Only for the threat of cutbacks, they might not have got together and those hate sites might still be in existence. Every cloud as they say has a silver lining.

In this issue, we feature an opinion piece which suggests that the Community and Voluntary Sector should “reconsider building its imaginary castles in the sky, and (re)consider creating ever greater visions of more rights and entitlements for its members and clients.”

Gearoid Fitzgibbon, a community worker and ‘Changing Ireland’ reporter and editorial team member, argues that the broad social movement advocated by ‘Is Féidir Linn’ is desperately needed, but has “no prospect for success if the group cannot offer the ordinary voter and business groups concrete proposals, instead of the cap-in-hand and threats of high taxation?”

If the Community and Voluntary Sector wishes to speak to the public about change, it needs to put forward a vision that people see common sense in, a vision that talks of responsibilities as well as rights and a vision that adds up in economic terms.

Readers might wonder who are we to be pointing out flaws elsewhere, given that the Programme we are now part of and involved in the promotion of has been widely criticised.

But if something's true, it shouldn't matter who says it and better to have it out than not.

Regarding the Local and Community Development Programme (LDCP), there are serious concerns, but there are also less-publicised advantages. You can't put close to 3000 workers together under the one roof without added benefit. In this issue, Minister Pat Carey outlines some of the positives.

Since June 30th, most Community Development Projects and Local Development Companies (LDCs) have agreed, albeit under pressure, on integration plans. The campaign to allow CDPs continue to operate independently did not win approval at national level from the Minister. However, he left the door ajar for alternative proposals, once they meet the Department's criteria.

While CDPs deal with the changes inherent in a takeover, the LDCs are busy rolling out the €425m Rural Development Programme, while internally dealing with a demand by the Department to reduce salaries by 10%.

As previously stated in this magazine, we fervently hope that the voices of disadvantaged communities will be heard even more in the future through the LDCP. There are concerns the opposite could happen.

Meanwhile general Programme concerns and criticisms have been aired in ‘Changing Ireland’ along with the Programme's positives and promised benefits for communities and we look forward to continuing to provide space for both sides of the debate.

Meanwhile people, want to see what the work on the ground is achieving and supporting and in this issue we report on excellent examples of community work from Kilkenny and north Dublin, south Limerick and elsewhere that receive support under the LDCP.

‘Changing Ireland’ will shortly be setting up as an independent company, after nine years of support and management by the volunteers and staff of the Community Development Network Moyross Ltd.

We are staying in Moyross, staying editorially independent and sticking with our aims (more of which you can read on our website).

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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, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs.

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Wanted: News reporters

We're on the lookout for aspiring news reporters who have an eye for Civil Society and/or Community Development stories. Ideally, you should work as a volunteer or paid worker in a CDP or local development company. Contact the editor. If we print it, we'll pay for it.

Thank you!

Thank you to the many community organisations – local and national – that emailed in stories. Letters always welcome. Also, check us out on facebook, youtube, blogger and on our website: www.changingireland.ie.



'Changing Ireland' to become independent company

Moyross, Limerick-based 'Changing Ireland', is to establish itself as an independent company by year's end.

The community media project exercises editorial independence and has reported on the Community Development Programme's achievements and on community issues for nine years.

Directly employing two people and involving up to 40 in the production process (not including the printers), it has operated under the management of CDN Moyross, the local CDP, and they are taking steps now to set the project up independently.

The new company's main contract will be with the Department

of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs to produce 'Changing Ireland' as the national magazine of the Local and Community Development Programme.

"We are glad the project has been secured for the future and are pleased to see it take on the larger task of promoting the new bigger Programme.

It is a credit to all those involved," said Deirdre O'Driscoll, chairperson of the CDN Moyross.

A new board should be put in place shortly and the process of setting up the project as a not-for-profit company has begun.

For a report on our local work in setting up www.moyross.ie, which was launched by Minister Carey on July 27th, visit our blog!

CHANGING IRELAND



INTRODUCTION

Ministers, TDs, civil servants and community workers on the ground can rejoice over an unexpected win to emerge from current conflict between the Government and Civil Society over community funding issues.

Local community campaigners joined forces online and helped to take on one of the biggest web companies, Facebook, forcing it to remove two big racist websites.

However, other smaller anti-Traveller sites remain in existence.

The people behind one of the sites made no effort at first to hide their identities.

Community activists shut down facebook hate sites

- Racist membership was reaching 10,000



Four of those (ringed) responsible for Babies for Bait.

By Allen Meagher

Community activists went online en-masse in May to force Facebook to remove two racist sites targeting the Traveller community that had a combined membership of very close to 10,000 members.

The most popular site proposed shooting Travellers on Monday afternoons while another one was set up by four drinking buddies from Killarney, Co. Kerry and suggested that Traveller babies should be used as shark-bait.

On May 19th, 'Babies for Bait' was shut down at by Facebook four hours after the company "removed" the 'Hunting' site, the homepage of which had featured a man with an enormous gun.

The 'Babies for Bait' page was in existence for ten months.

In February, one of the four "admin" people named on the site wrote about Travellers on his friend's publicly open Facebook page, asking: "Where is an AK47 when you need it?"

The friend replied: "I need special with never-ending bullets."

This was one of the most serious examples of the

way the people involved in these sites talk.

Meanwhile, the photo section of the 'Babies for Bait' site proposed burning Travellers out of caravans.

Members of both sites ranged from secondary school pupils to UCD business and law students to a businessman, a hotel and a bar in Kerry.

Coincidentally, shortly after two sites were removed, Foreign Minister Dermot Ahern made a speech at a Press Council event when he said people responsible for defamatory and offensive online material can and will be sued.

The Garda Racial and Intercultural Office (GRIO) repeated that message to 'Changing Ireland' in July.

Therefore, those behind 'Promote the Use of Knacker Babies for Bait' which had 664 members and 'Setting Aside Monday Afternoons to Hunt Knackers' with over 8,000 members may yet be prosecuted.

If so, it would be the first time members of the public in Ireland are prosecuted for racist online activity, according to Sergeant Dave McInerney of the GRIO.

Until now, people in Ireland joined hate-sites on

facebook without fear of repercussions and in the absence of state policing, it was left to community activists and groups representing those targeted to make life uncomfortable for them.

One Traveller working under the pseudonym 'Brian Cowen' has named and shamed dozens of members of the 'Babies for Bait' site, publishing information (gleaned from their own facebook pages) about where they say they work or go to college and sometimes naming their parents or siblings.

Those behind the 'Babies for Bait' site were naïve or indeed bold enough to set the site up without fear of a reaction and only after one of them was confronted by 'Changing Ireland' did they seek to hide or disguise their identities.

Two work in the tourism industry in Kerry, one says he works in a large telecommunications company while the fourth appears to have emigrated to Australia.

The Irish Traveller Movement described the sites as "particularly vile" and "grossly offensive."

Fitzgibbon Street Garda Station in Dublin is understood to be investigating two formal complaints about the bigger site made by Ron Archibald of Pavee Point, a national Travellers' organisation and by community worker Emma Maguire.

Ben said Facebook need to face up to the racism in a real way and that they have responsibilities while Pavee Point's director Martin Collins said the sites were "disgusting" and he was glad the issue was being highlighted.

The site creator behind the 'Babies for Bait' site – a man we'll call 'Mike' – wrote with regret to friends within hours of his site being removed. In his message, he also lamented the removal the same day of two other anti-Traveller sites, including one called 'I hate gypsies'.

Another site is now growing in popularity and community activists may soon lobby Facebook to shut down a site called 'I fucking hate knackers'.

Three of 'Mike's' buddies joined this site within hours of their own site being pulled, with one Slovakian friend explaining he did so because Travellers were "f...ing animals". His details and those of the 300-plus other members have been recorded.

Two of 'Mike's' 'admin' pals also joined 'Abolish the Knackers!' which is in fact a George Orwell-devoted page, though that seems to have been lost on them. Orwell wrote about the offensive term innocently in referring to people who boil horse-carcasses to make glue.

'Mike' did not join any new sites publicly, maybe finally sensing that big brother was watching.

Meanwhile, the hotel that had linked to his site issued a statement to 'Changing Ireland' reporter ROSS RYAN in which it claimed their connection to the 'Babies for Bait' site was "not known to us".

A spokeswoman said, "We view such pages as anti-social in the extreme and are shocked that it is possible that a link can be created without our knowledge or consent."

The hotel deleted its facebook page linking to the site that same day.

For full coverage, see pages 16-17.



Northside Partnership – getting people back to work

Dublin's Northside Partnership is really getting people back to work

- 98 new businesses started up in Coolock since January

A course called 'Planning for Business' run by Dublin's Northside Partnership has changed people's lives in Coolock.

RTE, with their interest in start-your-own-business programmes, should call over because between January and mid-June, 243 people completed the course and 98 of those people set up businesses.

That figure beats the target figure for all of 2008 three to four times over.

"Two years ago, our target was to get around 200 people on the course and to get 30 to 40 people setting up businesses," said enterprise manager Cepta Dowling.

The Mission of the Northside Partnership is to be the driving force in meeting the challenge of social inclusion in its catchment area and it is also engaged in other initiatives to support unemployed people.

However, the business start-up support is winning it such attention that there is a waiting list to join the course.

Cepta said they've seen all types of workers come to them with small business ideas – from massage therapists, fitness instructors, music teachers and healers to construction workers and electricians.

"We're on the ground with the clients. Most people come to us through Social Welfare referrals, but the other big referral is word of mouth," she said.

The Partnership employs two enterprise officers to meet prospective course participants and they check to see if the person is ready and if not they nurture them until they are.

22 people at a time do the course and they are steered towards a hopefully brighter future by Orla O'Carroll who has facilitated the course over 50 times now.

"We try and get them to tweak and twist their ideas to get a competitive edge," she said, noting that people were generally motivated by the simple wish to replace lost incomes, having become unemployed.

"They're not setting up big businesses, they're micro-businesses," said Orla, "and the outcomes here are extremely high."

The Partnership has mastered the knack of picking the people who will most benefit from the course.

"All the people who come here have a very clear idea of what they're doing," said Orla. "Most of them have applied for the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance which means they're now opting to remove themselves from social welfare and register as self-employed."

"Places are free to participants because they're funded by agencies, but they are highly valued by participants and there's a long waiting list for his course."

Orla saw herself as part of a team, building on the work of her colleagues: and she said that the Northside Partnership had a huge appetite for the crucial preparatory work: "They see their remit as very much working with people on the ground. There's tight evaluation and they're constantly checking the feedback."

Full attendances are the norm.

"I start facilitating the course with a new group next Monday. That's 22 people coming along to a course in July, something you'd never have heard of before."

Orla believes the course is "probably the best of its kind in the country." She credits the teamwork involved in preparing candidates before they go on the course.

"I think the model here is probably the best in its class. The overall model here works. By the time they come to me, they're fully engaged. Also, the course is certified."

Northside Partnership will have helped almost 200 people leave unemployment behind them and set up in business by December of this year. In total around 500 people will have completed the course.

The Northside Partnership is part of the national Local and Community Development Programme which is managed by Pobal on behalf of the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs.

More info: Contact the Northside Partnership and ask to speak to one of the company's two enterprise officers. Tel. 01-8485630. <http://www.northsidepartnership.ie>

Online reports: View our interviews with Kevin, Cepta and Orla on: www.youtube.com They can also be accessed via: www.changingireland.ie



Kevin "knows definitely" he'll make a job of it

Course participant Kevin Hendrick from Coolock in Dublin, intended to set up a sports therapy company after completing the short course in June. A printer for 10 years, Kevin was laid off in 2007 and decided to change career and move into sports therapy.

He gives the start-your-own-business course "ten out of ten", saying that other courses didn't teach him much, but this one really worked for him.

"I feel that every class teaches me so much. I've loads of ideas, but I didn't know what to do with them, but we've gone through business planning," he said, adding that he "knows definitely" he will be in full-time employment afterwards.

Online reports: View our interviews with Kevin, Cepta and Orla on: www.youtube.com They can also be accessed via: www.changingireland.ie

Unemployed networking

The Northside Partnership puts a strong emphasis on getting unemployed people to network.

"When people lose a job, they can become very isolated but they learn through networking that most of the barriers and challenges they face are the same as what other people face," said Orla O'Carroll, course facilitator.

Family Resource Centres / New Department



Dept. has grown not disappeared!

An Roinn Gnóthaí Pobail, Comhionannais agus Gaeltachta
Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs

The Minister of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, Pat Carey, has expressed great hopes in his newly reconfigured Department.

Four months into the job, he noted that the media had written-off the Department earlier this year and couldn't have got it more wrong as it has doubled in size.

"The new Department will be a serious, policy-driven department. There's a huge amount of expertise here. I think this Department will be quite a significant crucible for ideas," he said.

Minister Carey was reluctant to make predictions, but appeared confident that the Department will survive the next election even if there's a change of political parties.

"We have to draw up a strategy statement within 6 months of my being appointed a Minister.... In fact, I think it'll take the best part of two years (to fully develop). It is highly likely I'll be gone out of the Department before it is bedded down to a refined extent," he told 'Changing Ireland'.

The Department's website has been updated and now includes up-to-date information on its reach and responsibilities.

More info: www.pobail.ie

FRCs rising to assist the newly unemployed



FRCs last year launched a range of additional services and supports to meet the demands of newly unemployed people.

The work was marked on July 7th with the launch by Minister Pat Carey of a report detailing the response to the jobs crisis by the 107 FRCs nationally. It found that over 150,000 people accessed information from FRCs last year and almost 14,000 availed of training courses directly related to gaining employment.

"We also provide emotional and personal support," said Pakie Kelly, Chairperson of the Family Resource Centre National Forum – which launched the report alongside the Family Support Agency.

Over 13,000 people were provided with direct, one-to-one support – what FRCs call 'cup-of-tea' support – in 2009.

FRCs also provided in-house counselling to over 5,000 people nationally.

"While FRCs have always provided developmental supports, counselling and information services, many had to expand and tailor their offerings last year to respond directly to the needs of the unemployed.

"Many FRCs offered very practical support to the unemployed: free internet and administration services; assistance with CV writing, and packs with all the relevant information needed by job-seekers.

"Some Centres noted a particularly high number of young male users, accessing Back to Education support, personal development courses, and information and resources to assist them in seeking work."

POSITIVE TRENDS

However, Pakie said there were also a number of positive developments last year.

"Providing photocopying and computer services has a knock-on effect of attracting people to FRCs that we have traditionally found difficult to reach. What we

have seen now is that – if people come to an FRC to get information on job opportunities or unemployment supports – they are more likely to engage then with other activities and return to the Centre for future events."

Pakie also noted "a growing level of voluntary activity." FRCs are largely dependant on volunteerism.

Last year, 2,744 people volunteered in FRCs, making a contribution equivalent to that of 343 full-time staff members or €10.98 million (calculated in accordance with the average industrial wage). A further 985 volunteers served as members of the boards of management of FRCs.

SUPPORT FOR GRANDPARENTS

Speaking at the launch, Pat Bennett, Chief Executive Officer of the Family Support Agency said the report "shows that FRCs impact positively on the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, and respond in a flexible manner to the needs of their local communities."

According to Mr. Bennett, a future priority for FRCs will be to support grandparents who find themselves playing a key role in bringing up their grandchildren, something that is particularly becoming more common in disadvantaged communities.

FRCs part of new Dept.

The first FRCs were set up in 1994. They are funded by the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs through the Family Support Agency, the government agency that administers the FRC programme. All FRCs involve people from marginalised groups and areas of disadvantage at all levels, including on their voluntary management committees.

W: <http://www.familyresource.ie/>



Minister Meets Forum Reps

Minister Pat Carey met with reps from the National Community Development Forum (NCDF) on July 29th as this magazine went to press.

The Forum had written five times to the Minister seeking a meeting and TDs and Senators had also pressed the Minister over the matter.

The Minister wrote to the Forum in May explaining why he wouldn't meet them at the time – his understanding was that they were campaigning to retain the status quo and by meeting them he could “engender false hope on your side that I could be persuaded to change the policy position outlined... since the new Programme was launched.”

Forum chairperson Larry McCarthy said prior to the meeting that it was “imperative,

if we are to retain over 2000 volunteers who work tirelessly in their own community, that the NCDF as the national representative group for all CDPs (meets with the Minister and his officials).”

On June 11th the Forum submitted its alternative proposal for CDPs nationally and it was examined by Department officials and by the Minister.

On June 28th, the Minister indicated he was not entirely satisfied with the NCDF's proposal.

He later spoke in the Oireachtas spelling out his reasons for not endorsing it (while nevertheless indicated some local models may indeed be approved) and he formally wrote to the Forum informing

them of his views.

In recent months, the Forum has met with the Irish Local Development Network (representing local development companies) and the Community Workers Co-operative, among others.



Good news for CDPs serving Cork, Limerick, Women and Travellers - they're winning approval for alternative models

As well as the Cork and Limerick models, Women's CDPs and Traveller CDPs are also understood to be at advanced stages in working out with the Department how a different model could work for their CDPs and their communities' particular needs.

In most parts of the country, CDPs are being absorbed into Local Development Companies (aka Partnerships) and many if not most of them are likely to close down as companies.

The Limerick model proposes “that instead of ‘integrating’ Partnerships and CDPs in Limerick city, CDPs are amalgamated into one “City CDP” thus retaining local voluntary involvement with real responsibility and a continued say in decisions affecting their community.”

Limerick CDPs are aiming to “ensure that the LCDP is delivered as effectively and efficiently as possible with the maximum participation and buy in from volunteers engaged over the years on CDP management committees.”

The Department have been very clear that they want savings made in the areas of staff, HR, audit, administration and legal bills.

Meanwhile, Minister Pat Carey told ‘Changing Ireland’ he believed that alternative models can be agreed which “will address the concerns and the needs” of the Traveller CDPs and Women's CDPs.

An alternative model proposed by Donegal CDPs was not accepted by the Department and it was recommended to them to look at the Limerick model.

The full details on the Limerick model, including the management structure as submitted to the Department, is now available for download from: www.changingireland.ie/LimerickCDPsAlternativeModel.doc

CDP national campaigners “gutted”

A spokesperson for the National Community Development Forum (NCDF) said they were “gutted” that their proposal was largely rejected by Minister Pat Carey.

The Forum's proposal was for a Service Level Agreement (SLA) which would have seen funding continued for CDPs nationwide.

The Forum said this was the favoured route for almost every CDP around the country and some Partnerships and projects had written to them about it.

Within hours of learning the proposal was not a runner nationally, NCDF member Cathleen O'Neill appeared on television on TV3 expressing her disappointment.

Some phone calls to ‘Changing Ireland’ from CDPs in different parts of the country indicated that morale had declined after the Minister said “No” to the national proposal.

Up to 2,600 people had joined in the ‘Don't’ Cut The Grassroots’ campaign to save CDPs during May and June. (See pages 20-21).

CDPs do NOT need to close

Clodagh McDonnell, Principal Officer with the Department's Community and Local Development Division, wrote to project chairpersons, following the campaign called ‘Community Development – Don't Cut the Grassroots’.

She said: “It is important to note that, despite what is stated by many CDPs and by others, full integration does not mean closure of a CDP or the cessation of CDP

activities in any given area.”

“As has been stated many times by Ministers and the Department, any worthwhile community development activity or service delivered under the CDP can be delivered under the new LCDP and by the same staff who currently do this work, subject to Budgetary provision.

For more on the ‘Don't Cut The Grassroots’ campaign, see pages 20-21.

CDPs do NOT need to hand over assets

As highlighted in an earlier edition of ‘Changing Ireland’, there is no obligation on projects to hand over assets. There has been confusion about this.

On June 1st Clodagh McDonnell, Principal Officer, wrote to CDP chairpersons who had contacted the Department with concerns over this issue and others. Clodagh wrote:

“In a full integration situation, all assets and net liabilities would usually transfer by agreement. However, the Department has made it clear that other arrangements are possible if CDPs or LDCs want this e.g. the ownership of buildings need not transfer to the LDC. Pobal will be able to advise on this aspect.”

The work on the ground goes on

INTRODUCTION - WORK ON THE GROUND

The Local and Community Development Programme is due to take off by the end of this year. The work on the ground in communities continues in the meantime.



John Hehir, Denise McNamara and Zoe Hehir who attended the drugs information day and organiser Caroline Keane.

100 attend drugs info day in Southill

- Limerick, June 23rd, 2010

In June, Southill CDP in Limerick brought together 12 staff from 10 agencies involved in anti-drugs work for a public information day on drugs.

A lot of parents brought along their children to see what drugs look like so they would recognise the dangers when confronted by the real thing.

'Changing Ireland' met a mother of an eight-year-old concerned about the way schoolchildren are being targeted. She was determined to educate her young child before it was too late.

Others sought advice on the day from Slainte, Aljeff,

North Star, Cuan Mhuire, Victory Outreach from Cork and others on ways to overcome addiction.

Caroline Keane is a community-based Drugs Education Worker and she says alcohol and nicotine are the most widely used drugs in Southill.

She was pleased at the end of the day: "We had 100 local people along today and 30 of them signed up for training." The training includes joining a Community Addiction Studies course starting in September.

See connected story: TD appeals for "reversal" of cuts to addiction services in country areas, on page 14-15.

Nascadh CDP makes the link for Google

Nascadh CDP was among the community groups in Dublin recently who linked up older people with Google employees to see how to make the most of the internet.

Google staff hosted classes for over 200 people aged 50 and upwards week at its European Headquarters in Dublin.

The "students" received one-to-one tuition in how to use the internet, send email and get to grips with social networking websites like Skype, Facebook and Twitter.

Google Ireland's Social Action Group develops community outreach programmes for its employees to increase the search company's involvement in the local community.



President on Sherkin island to award degrees

President McAleese was the guest of honour on Sherkin Island, Co. Cork, at the conferring of full honours degrees for the Dublin Institute of Technology's BA in Visual Art Graduation in April.

The course brings professional artists to the area and creates opportunities for students, other artists, communities and arts groups.

At the unique graduation ceremony President McAleese remarked that it was "the culmination of over 10 years of careful planning and pilot projects and that it marks something quite remarkable and wonderful – the successful delivery of a fully accredited degree programme on an island."

She congratulated all those whose determination "turned an ambitious idea into a successful reality."

The seven final-year students from the BA in Visual Art Programme were awarded with their degrees by Dr Frank McMahon, director of academic affairs, DIT.

The event was attended by various local community and governmental representatives as well as family, friends and members of the wider community.

The project is funded under the LCDP.

LCDP and Age & Opportunity collaboration



Age & Opportunity is planning to roll out a programme called 'Aging With Confidence' in nine counties in collaboration with Local Development Companies and local VECs.

Ann Healy of the Southside Partnership talked about her experience of delivering and taking part in the Ageing with Confidence course held in Shankill recently. She said it was "a life-changing experience" where people shared stories they'd never talked to anyone about.

The programme is expected to expand into Munster later this year.

W: www.ageandopportunity.ie

Taoiseach opens Offaly offices of new community “powerhouse”

Taoiseach Brian Cowen has hailed the development of the Offaly Local Development Company as “a powerhouse for local endeavour”.

The Taoiseach said that by maximising synergies between programmes and sharing facilities, resources and expertise, “Offaly LDC has the potential to do even more, as a powerhouse for local endeavour”.

The Offaly LDC was formed following the amalgamation of Offaly LEADER Company, OAK Partnership, Tullamore Wider Options Ltd. and West Offaly Integrated Partnership.

The Taoiseach officially opened new offices in Tullamore, Co. Offaly, for the Offaly Local Development Company in June.

Offaly LDC is responsible for delivering both the Rural Development Programme and the Local and Community Development Programme in the county.

Walks scheme launched in north Cork



Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, Mary Hanafin visited the offices of

Integrated Rural Development Duhallow offices in Newmarket, Co. Cork, on June 10th to launch a walks scheme.

The Walks Scheme is a national scheme and open to all landholders on national waymarked ways, looped walking routes and heritage routes along with other trails that have been approved by the National Trails Office. IRD Duhallow has been approved to deliver the scheme on the Duhallow Way and Blackwater Way sections of the Munster Way.

Separately, IRD Duhallow is seeking individuals who have a background in boxing and are interested in volunteering to develop a Youth Boxing Initiative in Kanturk. • More info: www.duhallow.info

Politics with cake in Waterford

Ballybeg CDP in Waterford city, working to deal with a tight budget this year, held a cake sale on June 7th and tied it in with a public meeting immediately afterwards.

All residents were called to the meeting which was “to highlight the importance of keeping the Parish Centre in local ownership.”

From the day when details of the Local and Community Development Programme were first announced last November, Ballybeg CDP’s voluntary management committee publicly declared that they would not let their assets transfer to any group or agency that did not belong to the community.



Kilkenny: €70,000 for rural film groups

The Kilkenny Leader Partnership has agreed to fund the Young Irish Film-Makers (YIFM) for three years, starting this autumn.

Martin Rafter, rural development manager, said the bulk of the €70,000 grant will go on camera equipment and the remainder to support outreach work to rural areas in the county.

The YIFM can boast of very high levels of participation, but the project was aware it wasn’t reaching everyone.

The Partnership-sponsored camera equipment will be for use by rural groups who receive training, with the YIFM responsible for its maintenance.

For our full report on the YIFM and their new national outreach programme, see our report from Kilkenny on pages 10-11.

Partnership applauds Hebron’s “extraordinary” volunteers

Happe House volunteers in Hebron Park, Kilkenny city, create challenges for agencies coming in from outside. They refused for instance to consider asking a dignitary to open the Centre’s extension last May.



“We didn’t believe in bringing in a suit as I call them,” said volunteer Teresa Heary. “We got the oldest lady and the youngest baby here to do it, we kept it in the community.”

John Murphy, social inclusion manager with the Kilkenny Leader Partnership, said the volunteers in Happe House have a real grá for their community:

“Gladys and Teresa are extraordinary people doing inspirational work. You sometimes get that in communities around the country. We wouldn’t be half as effective in the area without them.

“They provide a key platform for us to reach some of the most marginalised parts of town. We’d view the infrastructure they’ve built up as absolutely central for the area.”

“We’re proud to work with them and to be challenged by them sometimes, which is a good thing. They make our programmes work and we put a substantial amount into the area, supporting activities on a near-daily basis.”

Find out more about how volunteers are improving the quality of life in Hebron and surrounding areas in our report from Kilkenny on pages 10-11.

Women design fridge magnet for drug addicts

St. Mary’s Women’s Group from King’s Island in Limerick has come up with an unusual way of helping drug users who want to get clean but don’t know where to go.

The women, who took part in a drug awareness course recently, have created a fridge magnet containing a list of contacts providing help and information.

Noel Phelan, Drugs Education and Prevention Worker with St Mary’s CDP worked with the women on the course. He said: “When someone decides they want to get off drugs there is a small window of opportunity and they need to know where to go immediately because tomorrow they will have changed their mind”.

The fridge magnet is simple. It consists of a sheet of contact numbers printed on magnetic-backed paper.

For more information, contact Noel at St Mary’s CDP, King’s Island, Limerick.

E: npstmaryscdp@eircom.net • T: 061-411076.

CHANGING IRELAND

CALL US WITH YOUR STORY!

This is the beginning in a series showing how local work around the country continues, while policy makers, politicians and community activists seek at the same time to influence the shape and structure of the Local and Community Development Programme.

Call us with your story that shows the work you’re project/company is engaged in locally, especially if there’s something new and inspiring in it! Work we cover seeks to adhere to core principles of Community Development. • Contact details on page 2.



- Allen Meagher reports from the Kilkenny offices of the Young Irish Film Makers

Youth work with

Mike Kelly made award-winning films for the BBC in London and worked with street-children in Sydney before returning to his native Kilkenny 19 years ago to launch a new project.

"And 19 years later, this project – the Young Irish Film Makers – is still unique," says Mike.

RTE could have done it but they weren't interested and now it's going national – through an outreach programme that trains people to make professional low budget films with young people in their area.

For people sitting on budgets for RAPID areas, for rural development, or for youth work, it's worth checking out.

FILM-MAKING IN 3 DAYS

Having completed one of these 3-day courses myself, in May, I think the YIFM have got it right. They used to squeeze the training into a couple of days or stretch it over a couple of weeks, but 3 days works best.

It's amazing to go from having no notion about



On location...

Volunteer-run Happe House confounds estate's critics

By Allen Meagher

Happe House Community Centre in the heart of Hebron Park housing estate in Kilkenny city is the kind of place I wouldn't turn up to again without a packet of biscuits.

"Did you not bring any with you," asked Teresa, almost as if we'd agreed in advance that this was to be my passport to getting an hour of their voluntary time.

It wasn't as if volunteers Teresa Heary and Gladys Bowles had rung me up for coverage. A literacy tutor in Kilkenny had tipped me off, saying it was the most wonderful project that he'd come across in years.

Staff from the Kilkenny LEADER Partnership which has begun working with the all-volunteer-run Happe House in recent years agree.

It's based in a part of Kilkenny that most people in the city regard with suspicion and negativism.

LABELLED THE WORST ESTATE IN KILKENNY

Maybe no surprise then that the tune Gladys was playing rather loudly through the Centre's sound system when I visited was the soundtrack from the 'Gladiator' film.

The centre is named after one of the founding members, the late Bill Happe and today volunteers keep the place open from 8am to 10pm, six days a

week.

"The only areas that are disadvantaged are those that are taken advantage of. That's the way I feel. I get really bothered about being called "disadvantaged", said Gladys.



Gladys Bowles and Teresa Heary.

"We are labelled the worst estate in Kilkenny," said Teresa, "but I'll show you something I'm very proud of – the park."

She showed me around a beautiful and well-kept children's park, pointing out it wasn't fenced in, can't be locked and yet there's rarely trouble.

"But when there is, the media/politicians talk about Hebron Park. Yet, when the dignitaries are doing something, or there's something nice going

on, it's called Garrinreen Park."

Stigmatisation is a common problem facing disadvantaged areas.

But why the huge dedication?

"People do ask why do we volunteer – I say you're mental not to take pride in your area," said Gladys.

RECOGNISE VOLUNTEERS SHOULD BE RECOGNISED

Neither of the women has ever received an award.

"I'd be absolutely mortified if I got an award, but do I think volunteers should be recognised," said Gladys.

They might win something this year however – they've entered the Tidy Towns Awards.

"Why not!" said Gladys.

In May of last year, Happe House was extended and it now caters for everything from courses in drug awareness and road safety to model car building. There is also a playschool, a pennybank, youth clubs, a men's group, a computer room and the list goes on.

Neither Gladys nor Teresa miss a trick when it comes to funding. The model car building project won National Lottery funding.

The project went up in flames before it started however, much to tutor Peter O'Brien's shock and to the dismay of Cllr Joe Malone who backed the



cameras goes national

how to make a film on a Monday morning to producing one by Wednesday.

The trainers throw in tips for how best to find a suitable story, allocate crew positions and keep on schedule, and the main aim is on training youth leaders to repeat the exercise with young people.

That's the whole point. It isn't about taking on Hollywood, the emphasis is on the youth work involved, the confidence-building, the team-building. In short, the kids.

"We started out with 15 teenagers in 1990," said Mike. "Now we make short feature films with hundreds of young people each year."

I was talking to Mike in the YIFM offices in Kilkenny and as he spoke, teenagers in school uniforms started pouring in from every doorway. School was over.

Brad Ellis (13) told me, "I first heard about this from a friend; now I'm an actor in 'The Usurpers' film, there are 30 in the cast."

Brad and his pal Lukas Hartmann spelt out the name of their website for me: HYPERLINK "<http://www.bracknashaddax.co.cc>" www.bracknashaddax.co.cc. They say it's devoted to "zen-film-making".

The project deals with the 10-20-year-old age group and classes are held every day.

"IT'S YOUTHWORX WITH CAMERAS" - MIKE

Linda Hanbidge started off like Brad or Lukas, going to the YIFM as a teenager. Now she works there, as a national outreach worker.

"We ran our first outside course through the local Community Development Project LARC here in Kilkenny and since then we've run courses in schools and with Family Resource Centres in the South-East and for free with groups throughout County Kilkenny thanks to Kilkenny LEADER Partnership.

"Not everyone in Kilkenny wants to play hurling, you know," says Linda.

For the young people, it's about making a film, but the primary purpose for us always is developing them and helping them discover their potential," continued Mike. "It's youth work with cameras and computers."

Important work takes place when the children get involved in on-screen editing.

"There's a whole new literacy has arrived and if you can't work with computers, you can't engage socially or look for a job anymore."

He applauds Youthreach's work nationally on this issue with groups in disadvantaged areas through it's 'Digital Literacy Programme'.

The project's main funders – supporting the employment of six staff – comes from the Arts

Council and the National Youth Council of Ireland, while FAS funding employs a seventh worker.

COMPUTER-LITERACY

In the world of film, YIFM's impact emulates the Cats' success with hurleys, as demonstrated by the fact that film-courses in Dublin are overflowing with Kilkenny people. A number of successful film companies also trace their roots back to YIFM. The real measure however is how young people develop from the experience.

"They develop confidence, computer skills, learn team-work, have a laugh and learn about abilities they didn't know they have," said Linda.

More recently, the YIFM ran two outreach courses in Limerick city.

The cost was €55 per participant, good value for three days training, and the price will remain low while the pilot stage of the outreach work continues.

NOTE: 'Zombie Love' featuring a star performance from Ross Ryan, a journalist currently on placement with 'Changing Ireland' is on youtube. Another film produced by people attending a course in St. Munchin's Family Resource Centre in Limerick should be online shortly. It features some embarrassing acting from this reporter.

W: www.yifm.com T: 056-776-4677.

project.

Teresa recalled: "We were downtown with the cars and the boys turned them all on together, there was a surge of power and all the (electric) chips in the cars melted. The power surge came from pylons on the roof of the nearby Bank of Ireland and the cars had to be sent to England for repairs."

But Happe House still has a good relationship with banks.

"We got €3,000 from AIB in the Better Ireland Awards," said Gladys. She's glad by the way that AIB copped onto giving a grant to each of the three finalists, rather than the corporate-style winner-takes-all competition the bank used to run.

YOUNG MEN ON COURSE

"At the moment, we're doing a community garden project with New Park Close FRC," said Gladys. "It's for young men that were on the dole who wanted to come off the dole but couldn't find work... They've activities five days a week now and as it's coming to an end, they're asking for an extension."

Gladys said they were told to expect people to drop off the course as time went on.

That might happen in some FAS courses, but not in Happe House.

"We still have the 19 we started with. Nobody believed we'd keep them occupied. It's one achievement we're quite happy with," smiled Teresa.

After nearly ten years visiting very worthwhile



Community Development Projects, usually meeting with staff, it takes a while to take onboard that everyone involved in this Kilkenny-based project is voluntary.

Their work is well regarded. The local Partnership company recognises that the volunteers in Hebron Park are "inspirational" and have a "grá" for what they do (see accompanying box).

"I hate people in their areas knocking where they come from. How do your children have hopes of getting jobs if people knock the area? I love where I live," said Gladys.

Both women believe that in recent times community spirit is returning. Partly because of the recession, people are more interested in what's happening in their communities.

"People are coming in now to us who never (bothered) when we first opened," said Teresa.

PARTNERSHIP SUPPORT

The workload on the volunteers has increased and they are finally moving towards taking on part-time paid workers to help out.

Since the spring, part-time Community Employment worker now cleans the Centre and soon, Happe House hopes to employ two paid staff if HSE funding comes through for the childcare workers in the crèche.

This is where Happe House's volunteer managers find the Kilkenny Leader Partnership particularly helpful, supporting them with funding applications and the like. The Partnership also runs a lot of activities through Happe House as well as having an outreach worker for the wider area based there.

Teresa was winding me up about the biscuits, but she and her volunteer partner in crime have a gift for making people want to contribute to the project they've been running for 14 and 21 years respectively.

How's a thousand words lads!

By the way, it's time to replace the Maxwell House with Fairtrade coffee.

To find out more about the model car building youth project, which is a novel way to counteract a tendency in a community towards anti-social behaviour, call Happe House on 056-7731004.

There's also an excellent report online at: <http://www.kilkennyalive.com/story/happe-days-are-here-again>



You need ‘argy-bargy’ in Community Development – Minister Carey

By Allen Meagher

If there wasn't argy-bargy in Community Development, you could “throw your hat at it”, according to Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, Pat Carey.

He recalled a period in the 1970s when there were regular rows between himself, Tony Gregory, Fergus McCabe and Mick Raftery over which group should be managing a particular playground:

“I believe that good, honest upfront debate on the merits of our ideas is worthwhile.”

Asked about the way in which many people shied away from being critical over policy issues, after close to two decades of Fianna Fail in Government, he replied: “People say you put money into things to buy people off. I don't think so. Some of the initiatives we're now arguing about are ones that Fianna Fail put in, for example the Partnerships, RAPID, Clar. Why would we be kicking around something that we thought was a good idea?”

A lot of the recent controversy has been over CDPs being taken over by Local Development Companies.

Interestingly, the Minister said he could see instances where “CDPs do a reverse-takeover.”

“I wouldn't exclude that possibility, if there is a very weak local development group and a fairly strong CDP. To me it makes sense. The stronger one would support the weaker one.”

Minister Carey spoke about his “strong belief” in the process of Community Development” and said he stood for “an egalitarian society and in giving others a chance of they having their go.”

“People say I haven't listened very much. Well, I have, and by the way you don't have to be in a CDP to have a valid view of Community Development.”

The day before our interview, he sat down “with service users in a treatment centre to get their insights into the National Drugs Strategy and to ask what, if they were in my shoes, would they do.”



“People say I haven't listened very much. Well, I have, and by the way you don't have to be in a CDP to have a valid view of Community Development.”

He does this regularly. In the context of the Local and Community Development Programme, Minister Carey said he and his officials are aware of and working to deal with particular

concerns of Women's CDPs and Traveller CDPs: “I've met with the main Traveller organisations and my view is that a model will be developed which will address the concerns and the needs of the

Traveller community.”

“The same thing” applied to Women's CDPs, he added.

Asked will Gaeltacht CDPs be going in under Udaras na Gaeltachta, he replied, “A small number, maybe.”

He outright dismissed the notion that Community Development in Ireland will disappear with the ending of the Community Development Programme.

“Community Development is as valid in Foxrock as in Finglas, in Mallow as in Moyross. If we make a mistake, it is to think it only has to do with disadvantage and marginalisation. It is that, too.”

In relation to the closure of the Dublin Inner City Partnership and the impact that has on client groups, Minister Carey said: “We're going to ensure that services to all inner-city groups is maintained and we're working on a model that will ensure the delivery of comprehensive services to the people and I'm quite determined to do that.”

Asked if he was looking for a reduction in the number of community-focussed bodies funded by the Department or a reduction in the number of community bodies in general, he replied:

“I'd like to see the cake divided among fewer organisations so we can have a greater impact, rather than having everything sliced thinly which has happened in recent years to CDPs.”

“This time last year, I had a meeting with three CDPs in my area. The voluntary committee said, ‘We're worried that we're trading recklessly and what implications has that for me, for my family home?’ Some of them used their own personal resources to make up for the shortcomings of the funding from the State. Rather than seeing a Programme on a life-support machine, I'd like to put (the projects) on a sustainable footing with an agency, with another body in their community that can give added value to them all.”

Asked are Family Resource



Centres next in line for absorption into the Local and Community Development Programme, he replied:

"Look, let's take one step at a time. There will always be a variety of models out there and we'll never I hope be trying to shoehorn everybody into the same single model. Some of our nearest neighbours did that and killed off an awful lot of good stuff."

He spoke very highly of an FRC in Connemara he had visited recently.

It was "too early" for him to give an opinion yet on the idea of looking at all the islands together in terms of funding, as suggested by Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann, the Irish Islands Federation.

He acknowledged there were still "significant gaps in the provision of services in the drugs area."

The Minister hopes to continue with the scheme for funding National Organisations in the Community and Voluntary Sector:

Minister Carey says 'yes' to some CDP proposals

Minister Pat Carey has mixed views on alternative structures proposed by CDPs within the framework of the Local and Community Development Programme.

He had a positive view on the usefulness of Service Level Agreements (SLA) where adopted at local or regional level, but not nationally.

He said, "We're open to options that work, but there's got to be a reduction in the number of bodies, agencies and groupings and so on."

A lot of people had pinned hopes on the new Minister taking fully on board proposals coming from the ground up and initial comments by the Minister at events in Cork and Kerry recently sounded promising.

Many voluntary boards of Community Development Projects and some Partnership companies were hoping he would give the 'ok' for SLAs between CDPs and other agencies.

And he did, to a degree. He said

"It's an approach that worked very well and I'm satisfied from dealing with it."

He believed in the three-year funding cycle for the scheme.

The Minister didn't say whether or not he thought the cuts last year were "disproportionate" but he dismissed fears that cuts in December might be above average.

"This Department was three months ago due to be abolished, the media said. It's now doubled in size so I wouldn't pay a huge amount of attention to that."

Regarding the next budget, he said: "I'll be concentrating resources on the most marginalised and the most disadvantaged." One of those mechanisms, he said for example, was RAPID.

Finally, regarding visits he makes to communities, he remarked: "I make my own mind up when I go places, I can pick it up. I spent most of my time on the (community) side of the table. So don't try to cod me!"

each proposal would be judged on its own merits, area-by-area.

Two alternative proposals involving roughly a dozen projects each in both Limerick city and Cork city and county have more-or-less been accepted.

However, communities in Galway, Youghal, Tipperary and Donegal (among others) have had SLA proposals rejected.

Nationally, the Minister rejected the idea of allowing CDPs countrywide to enter into SLAs, as proposed by the National Community Development Forum.

"If you're talking about one size fits all, what might apply in A-Community might not apply in B-Community," he said.

And he left the door slightly ajar for alternative proposals telling 'Changing Ireland' he might allow for "injury time" proposals.

Our blog report – updated the day after the interview – includes the Minister's full reply on the matter.

Get behind the Programme! urges Minister

The Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, Pat Carey, issued a statement on June 30th acknowledging "the incredible work" being done by Community Development Projects (CDPs) and Local Development Companies (LDCs) and said everything he was doing was about maintaining services.

The Minister said CDPs and LDCs have "nothing to fear" from the new LCDP model of integration.

"It is all about ensuring that frontline services are maintained and that the important services currently being provided continue to play a vital role in strengthening our most disadvantaged and marginalised communities."

He urged CDPs and LDCs to "look to the future" and insisted that the Programme redesign was in line with best international practice and had nothing to do with the closing of CDPs or the

cessation of the essential services they provide to communities nationwide.

"I acknowledge the incredible work carried out by CDPs and LDCs but communities change and our approach to new challenges must change."

A couple of days before, Minister Carey told 'Changing Ireland' in an interview that we need "clarity" about where we're going:

"There are a small number of groups out there who are hoping to string the process along and hope we'll go away, that there might be an election and the whole thing will stall."

"My view is it would be better for all the citizens of this country, who are recipients of the services, and be in everybody's interest if people said let's knuckle down and work out how we're going to develop this process for the next number of years."

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

Young Irish Film Makers
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RAPID – now covering 51 areas

The number of areas covered by the RAPID Programme now stands at 51.

This year, residents of five towns newly admitted to the Programme will get a total of €1.25m for new playgrounds or other social infrastructural projects.

The funding of €250,000 per town is being spent in: Rathkeale, Co. Limerick, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford, Ballina, Co. Mayo and, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath.

The funding means local RAPID committees – called Area Implementation Teams – can kick-start projects in their areas. The local teams include at least three local residents to ensure the money is properly targeted.

The funding is going to stand-alone projects such as improving disabled access to community facilities, educational and environmental improvements and playgrounds.

An important element of the Government decision of May 2009 to expand the Programme to the five new towns was a reiteration by all Government departments and agencies of their commitment to the RAPID Programme.

The Government says it is “determined” to continue with the RAPID Programme which concentrates on seven strategic themes: Family Support, Community Safety and Anti-social Behaviour, Health, Physical Environment, Youth Support, Education, Employment and Training.



2010 ARTANE (FRC) Junior Minister Sean Haughey outside the new FRC occupying a former shop premises in Artane.

Artane: Shop turned into Family Resource Centre

There are a lot of vacant business premises in Ireland these days, but in Artane they've made use of one.

On May 21st, the old “Fruit & Grocery Shop” on Gracefield Road was officially reopened as a new Family Resource Centre.

Chairperson Sean Paul Mahon said the transformation of the shop into a Family Resource Centre was made possible by two local projects working in partnership and combining their resources.

The two projects are Artane Coolock Resource & Development Centre and Artane Drugs Awareness Project.

More than 120 people attended the opening in May and heard 15-year old Ryan Graydon explain how he had taken to golf, among numerous other activities run by the After School Group organised by Artane Drugs Awareness Project. Ryan attributed his ‘staying out of trouble’ to his involvement in the Centre.

Officially launching the Centre, Minister for Lifelong Learning, Sean Haughey, said despite the recession, the Government was committed to providing valuable support to families at a local level.

Artane Coolock Resource & Development Centre is funded by the Family Support Agency through the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs. Artane Drugs Awareness Project is funded by the Dublin North East Drugs Task Force.

CWC newsletter online



The latest edition of Community Work News, the newsletter of the Community Workers' Co-operative, is now available online from the Co-op's website (www.cwc.ie).

It includes coverage of current developments in the community sector, the Advocacy Initiative, Is Féidir Linn, and the Poor Can't Pay Campaign.

There are also contributions from the European Network Against Racism, the Equality & Rights Alliance and Voices that Matter and an opinion piece by Aidan Lloyd.

Niall Crowley's book: 'Empty Promises'

'Empty Promises' by Niall Crowley gives the inside story of “how the Equality Authority was brought to heel.”

It was published on May 13th and launched by Labour Party Leader, Eamon Gilmore.

Ireland for a brief while was to the forefront in Europe in advancing equality issues and the author was the first chief executive of the Authority. He resigned in protest after funding from Government was halved. Six board members also resigned.

The book tells how the Equality Authority came under attack—from hostile

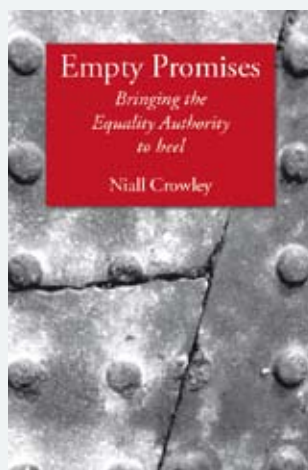
media, vested interests including the publicans' lobby, and interests within the public sector which he believes saw the Authority as a threat.

The experiences of people who challenged discrimination and others who sought to promote equality within their organisations are also recounted here.

The author concludes by setting out a programme of renewal for a more equal Ireland.

The 150 page paperback is for sale for €14.99 in bookshops or direct (p+p free inside Ireland) from the publishers A. & A. Farman in Dublin.

E: afarman@iol.ie T: 01-496-3625.



500 walk in hope from Doolough

By Rose Foley

Honouring the Irish who died of hunger more than 150 years ago while also raising awareness for the more than 1 billion people in the world today who don't have enough food, up to 500 people walked the 10 miles from Doolough to Louisburgh in Co Mayo on May 22nd as part of the 22nd annual Famine Walk.

The walk was held to commemorate the local people who died on the Death March at Doolough in March 1849 during the Irish Famine, as well as to highlight the world hunger problem. Unlike the bitter conditions of 1849, this year's walk was held in full sunshine against the dramatic background of the lake surrounded by mountains in the Doolough valley.

"This walk is not just about the past. It's a walk of remembering and solidarity, a walk in the hope of



Singer-songwriter Damien Dempsey in Doolough this year. Damien wrote and sang a song about the Choctaw Indians, whose ancestors suffered a fate similar to the Irish Famine victims and whose descendants have participated in past Famine Walks. Photo: Rose Foley.

something better. People are still walking the roads today in sub-Saharan Africa. We walk in solidarity with them," said Joe Murray, coordinator of Afri, the human rights group that organised the walk in

partnership with Trócaire and the Irish Seed Savers Association.

Maria McHale, coordinator of the Louisburgh Community Development Project, said although the CDP was not involved with organising the walk as in years past, the project helped with logistics, such as providing lifts for walkers. The CDP's focus on specific work plan goals has taken a lot of time and energy, which did not leave an opportunity to further assist with the walk, Maria said. "But I did think it went really well," she added.

Justin Kilcullen, director of Trócaire, told the crowd in a speech before the walk that The Great Hunger, more commonly known as the Famine, occurred because nobody was politically responsible for those living in poverty.

He said the same thing is happening today, with more than 1 billion people facing hunger daily.

"Who is responsible? Has anybody lost their job because of this?" he asked. "Has anybody been brought to court and charged with negligence? Has anybody been voted out of office? We will not solve the issue of world hunger unless we address political accountability."

Frank Feighan FG's new Community spokesperson



*Frank Feighan
Fine Gael TD
and Spokesperson
for Community,
Equality
& Gaeltacht Affairs,
July, 2010.*

Roscommon-based TD, Frank Feighan was appointed Fine Gael spokesperson for Community, Equality & Gaeltacht Affairs, on July 1st.

He replaces Mayo's Michael Ring who has become the party's spokesperson on Social Protection.

The 48-year-old from Boyle was first elected to the Dáil in May, 2007.

He will be assisted by Donegal TD Dinny McGinley who is fluent in Irish.

The other opposition party spokespersons by the way are:

Labour: Jack Wall TD and Senator Michael McCarthy (both spokespersons on Community affairs), Joe Costello TD (on Human Rights) and Brian O'Shea TD (on the Irish language).

Sinn Féin: Seán Crowe TD (spokesperson on Community, Social and Family Affairs) and NI Assembly member Martina Anderson (spokesperson on equality and human rights).

New report on penal reform - changes needed for prisoners facing release



The Irish Penal Reform Trust launched a report in May titled 'It's like stepping on a landmine - Reintegration of Prisoners in Ireland'.

The report assesses reintegration services and supports for prisoners before and after their release, identifies a number of key systemic failures, and makes 14 clear recommendations for necessary improvements.

For instance, positive initiatives such as Integrated Sentence Management only cover only a small number of prisoners.

The title - "It's like stepping on a landmine..." - is one former offender's description of the experience of leaving prison.

The report was launched in MACRO Community Centre in Dublin and included a speech by a former prisoner currently involved in a scheme run by Business in the Community.

The report is available on: www.iprt.ie

More info on Business in the Community: www.bitc.ie

Note: Check our online blog for details of a family day held in the Bedford Row Project in Limerick recently. Bedford Row supports families of prisoners.

Appeal over cuts to rural addiction services

Funding to drugs projects has been cut nationwide this year, despite protests. In Limerick, John Cregan, Fianna Fail TD, hit out at newly announced cuts to drugs services in his county.

Funding for services in Kilmallock and Newcastle West ended in June.

Deputy Cregan blamed the Mid-Western Regional Drugs Task Force for the loss of the two counsellors involved and said there would now be nowhere local for people struggling with addiction in these parts of Limerick to seek help.

He appealed for the cuts to be "reversed".

Ironically, Deputy Cregan's intervention comes just one day after drugs workers in Limerick city held a successful drugs information (ref: report on pages 8-9) showing there were places for families and addicts to go in the city.

Anti-Racism Work Pays Off

Facebook members could end up with convictions for joining hate sites

INTRODUCTION

A 'Changing Ireland' investigation has identified some of the people behind anti-Traveller sites on Facebook, they are open to prosecution and even people who join these sites – and indeed the Facebook company itself – could be prosecuted:

Allen Meagher reports

There could yet be serious repercussions for people who sign up to racist sites on Facebook, according to the head of the Garda Racial and Intercultural Office, Sergeant Dave McNerney.

Over 300 people are currently members of an anti-Traveller Facebook page called "I fucking hate knackers".

Two bigger racist sites were recently removed by Facebook, but this one remains and the details of each Facebook member who joined it has been logged.

The sites were pulled after complaints by community workers in the Republic and supporters of the Northern Ireland Council For Ethnic Minorities.

While nobody has been before the courts in the Republic to date for publishing racist material online, neither those who set up such sites nor those who click and join are immune from prosecution.

Sgt. McNerney believes it is only a matter of time and described it as "a very very serious form of crime."

He said that all it takes is one person or one group to make a complaint about these "very harmful" sites and the Gardai would launch a full investigation.

"Somebody must take a stand and we'd encourage people to make complaints when they witness racism," he said. "The lack of reporting is a serious issue and when nobody complains, it starts to explode. It normalises certain perceptions when people start to think they can get away with it."

"People don't realise the harm it causes. Such sites can lead directly to racial abuse against minorities in the streets."

He said racist sites "stigmatise a whole community."

Sgt. McNerney is nine years with the GRIO and he has seen the effects of racism on victims. He said it can cause "extreme psychological problems."

Publishing racist material falls under Section 2 and 3 of the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989, under which there have been a handful of convictions. None of the convictions to date have been for publishing.

However, as Sgt. McNerney pointed out, "The Public Order Act can also be used to prosecute people for racial abuse or threatening behaviour."

He encouraged people with complaints to come forward.

All complaints are forwarded to the Garda Internet Investigation Unit where they have the best of technology and can quickly track people down."

When the internet investigation unit complete their work, they hand over their findings to the local Garda station which first received the complaint and the next step is for the Director of Public Prosecutions to decide whether or not to proceed.

The Sergeant confirmed that Facebook could be among those prosecuted if a complaint is made which names them for publishing racist material. "Absolutely," he said.

Although Sgt. McNerney stressed that the first port of call for people should really be their local Garda station, members of the public are welcome to phone the GRIO for advice.

"People have a civic duty to confront racism when they see it," he said.

A survey by the African Refugee Network found that one third of all refugees have undergone abuse; verbal or physical.

So Duyi gets a rock thrown at him because he's Chinese, while he is on his way to work, while he contributes to our ailing economy and pays his taxes. He is brought to hospital where he receives an MRI scan and neck x-rays and stitches. (He was sent a substantial bill for these services three weeks later).

The next day, upon his release from hospital, Duyi goes straight back to work in the small cafe near Ranelagh, where his face shows the strain of consistent headaches. But headaches are not what Duyi's wife is worried about. She worries when she finds her usually vibrant and friendly husband jumping at the slightest sound or avoiding eye contact with other shoppers in Tesco or other passengers on the bus.

Duyi's wife has nowhere to turn. The English language is still foreign to them both. She cannot convince her husband to talk to someone about the trauma of his experience... but even if she could, who can help Duyi?



Gardai have 400 ethnic liaison officers nationwide

The Garda Racial and Intercultural Office has a staff of three and provides support and training to 400 ethnic liaison officers nationwide.

It recently had its brief extended and now has responsibility for all strands of diversity, including age, gender, sexual orientation and disability.

Its main achievements to date have been:

- establishing the network of Garda ethnic liaison officers.

- Consulting with ethnic communities and their leaders including from the Traveller community.

- In 2007 and '08, the GRIO's work was recognised at the World Refugee Day Awards.



Surviving racism

By Claire O'Keeffe

A slab of concrete was thrown at a Chinese man named Duyi in April. He suffered acute head injuries. It happened at around 7am at Rathgar in Dublin when he was cycling to work, like many other thousands of people in the city. Yet the heavy rock was thrown at Duyi and no one else on that balmy Tuesday morning.

Jason Doyle (29) was the young man who found semi-conscious Duyi at the side of the road, half under a parked car. He said the man was in complete shock.

"The guy was covered in blood and vomit and he couldn't talk very well," says Jason. "I called an ambulance straight away. He looked terrible."

The now closed National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) published a report in 2008 which showed that between 2006-'08, racist attacks dramatically increased.



'Keyboard Warriors' led by Waterford worker

Emma Maguire, a primary health care worker with Waterford Travellers' CDP praised the "keyboard warriors" who took action to remove two racist sites on Facebook in May.

"Most people I know in Community Development are very highly motivated and we do a lot of work to promote equality," she said.

Emma approached Pavee Point and alerted them to the fact that there was a lobby group called 'Hands Off Community Development' on Facebook with over 900 members.

She emailed members of the group and received 50 replies in one day from people, a lot of them her own friends, who were "disgusted" by the anti-Traveller sites.

The emails kept coming for the rest of the week.

"It was good to see that people cared. The sites were in breach of the law and needed to be shut down," she said.

"Nothing shocks me any more and I wasn't at first upset by the racist statements, just astonished at the stupidity of those who published it, if they thought they were not breaking any law."

For good measure, a community group in Waterford put in a complaint to the Gardai, complete with screenshots for evidence.



Donncha O'Callaghan with development worker Lynda Wakefield and Mahon CDP co-ordinator Viv Sadd at the launch of Age Link by Mahon CDP

Donncha O'Callaghan launches age-link service

Mahon CDP in Cork had Irish rugby star Donncha O'Callaghan launch the project's new Voluntary Visitation Service called 'Age Link' in June. Donncha's own grandmother Joan Roche is a recipient of the service which is the first of its kind outside one in Dublin. It's volunteer-driven and is designed to combat loneliness.

Joan is one of 11 older people in the area visited by an Age Link volunteer once a week. She described Donncha on the day of the launch as "her golden boy."

The 20 volunteers with the Age Link Service are drawn from the local area and they spend about an hour in the older person's home chatting about activities and events locally that could benefit the older person.

Sean Daly is one of the clients and he spoke at the launch, saying that volunteer Anne Downey cheers him up when she calls once a week: "I look forward to her visits, we have a chat and a cup of tea and she is more like a sister to me now. I'd be lost without her."

All the volunteers completed a comprehensive HSE-supported training

programme, which included Garda vetting and reference checks and they are able to identify people who may need further help. They relay that information to the CDP's Age Link co-ordinator, Lynda Wakefield, who liaises with the public health nurses, the home help service and organisations like Meals on Wheels.

The scheme was funded through the Dormant Accounts Fund and is supported by Mahon CDP which was set up in 1992 to tackle disadvantage, discrimination and exclusion.

Project co-ordinator Viv Sadd said the visitation initiative works because the service is "very personal and very localised" and he hopes it will be replicated in other parts of the country.

The event was covered by the national press and TV3.

For more information, contact Viv or Lynda lynda@mahoncdp.com at Mahon CDP and they will provide full details of how the scheme works.

E: lynda@mahoncdp.com

‘Is Féidir Linn’: A new departure or a **wish list** for Santa

OPINION

By Gearóid Fitzgibbon

When I first came across the term ‘Is Féidir Linn’, it rang very positively in my ear, echoing the slogan “yes we can” used by Barack Obama’s election campaign. Its call for a stronger civil society, better communication, cooperation and collective action is worthy. One year later, however, its long list of ideas on rights, taxation, public service, equal status etc is still out there, with little or no emphasis on how we’re going to develop the economy in order to pay the bills. Most recently Community Platform have produced a list of changes for a more progressive taxation system, which would raise more revenue, and help avoid more cuts.

The ‘Is Féidir Linn’ document, and the ‘Shaping our Future’ conference report seem to be yet another enunciation of the “lopsided social contract”, which outlines what everyone’s rights are or should be, but without anyone required to give anything back: responsibility is not mentioned at all, volunteering and active citizenship are to be looked at. The economy is mostly absent, with the overall document sounding like a wish-list for a Community and Voluntary Santa.

While purporting to be advocating a radical change of direction for Irish society, the conference (at least going by the published report) seems to embody much that is wrong with Irish civil society, which prevents a viable



alternative movement being formed. The June 2009 conference attendance reads like a who’s who of Irish community and voluntary life, but

how many of those attending were employees of government-funded organisations/programmes? How many were there on work? How many claimed expenses from the government for talking about how Ireland needed a radical new direction?

The Community and Voluntary Sector should reconsider building its imaginary castles in the sky, and creating ever greater visions of more rights and entitlements for its members and clients. The broad social movement advocated by Is Féidir Linn is desperately needed, but has no prospect for success if the group cannot offer the ordinary voter, and business groups concrete proposals, instead of the never-ending cap-in-hand, and threats of high taxation? Are old binary ideological divides what prevent us finding common cause with business interests?

Perhaps the wooliness of Community Platform’s ‘Is Féidir Linn/Shaping Our Future’ is what happens to state-funded radicals? In the words of Laurence Cox: “The power of the NGO industry has also created professionally trained or self taught organisers, who in effect have no other trade. As with any bureaucracy, they seek to justify their continued practice, irrespective of its actual impact upon poor communities.” See [HYPERLINK “http://www.interfacejournal.net”](http://www.interfacejournal.net) www.interfacejournal.net – a journal for and about social movements.

Yes, this country is crying out for change: new leadership, new values and an alternative model of development. Do we really believe that one state-funded segment of society, talking among themselves, is going to offer that change?

EDITOR’S NOTE:

We invite the people behind the ‘Is Féidir Linn’ initiative to submit a response to Gearóid’s opinion, to argue their case, to give their side of the story and to update us on how the initiative is developing.

Speaking up for the Sector

‘Is Féidir Linn’ members have become quite vocal this year in speaking up for the importance of having a strong Community Sector in Ireland.

Three members Mary Murphy, Niall Crowley and Aidan Lloyd, writing in the Irish Times on June 14th, said the Community Sector’s contribution had been diminished by: “Threats to the funding of organisations that advanced a critical advocacy, funding contracts that limited the sphere of activity of the funded organisation to the provision of local services, and the recent reconfiguration of

the Community Development Programme in a manner that compromises the funded organisations’ independence.”

The authors noted: “It is ironic that damage is being done to the community sector at a time of growing consensus that the necessary impetus for change must come from civil society.”

Is Féidir Linn aims to bring together a thousand people from all parts of civil society and from all corners of Ireland on Saturday, October 30th, to discuss plans for a more equal, inclusive and sustainable Ireland.

For more information, visit: www.claimingourfuture.ie
T: 01-8870726. E: info@claimingourfuture.ie

€337m for Regeneration in Limerick



Sunny days ahead for Limerick? Chanese Hayes and Julie Cawley of Sarsfield Gardens, Moyross. *Photo by: Adain Forrest.*

Just as communities were losing hope, the Government in June pledged €337 million for the Limerick Regeneration scheme.

Taoiseach Brian Cowen announced that 26 regeneration projects worth €337m will take place over the next four-and-a-half years, with building work starting this summer.

Local community leaders welcomed the news.

Mr Cowen said the money invested was justified in view of the “blighted lives and reduced potential” which has resulted from the failure of the authorities to plan properly for the Limerick area in the past.

Of the €337m, €116m will be spent on sustainable housing, €40m will be spent on community and social development, €10 will be spent on land purchases, with over €32m to be spent on civic buildings in Moyross.

Regeneration areas include Moyross, Southill, Ballinacurra Weston and St. Mary's Park.

The original masterplan came with a €3 billion price-tag and it has been drastically scaled down

The Taoiseach said: “I consider the regeneration initiative in Limerick to be of the utmost importance, both for the communities and families living in the city.”

Horace McDermott has been suspended as an agony uncle. Don't worry – through his union, he won the minimum statutory redundancy payment and we'll be issuing him with a cheque for 50cents any day now.

But why fire Horace?

Yes, he dealt with the most outlandish queries and gave even more outlandish advice, but the reality of the world we now live in means that every day the newspapers publish such ridiculous headlines that Horace has lost his way. He couldn't compete with the level of ridiculousness in the real world today.

However, the good news is that we've seen there's an appetite for good news. From this issue onwards, Horace has been re-hired to report on good news from the world of Community Development that you might have just missed. His reports are 100% accurate, reliable and true.*

In the meantime, Horace wishes us to pass on his thanks to the thousands of desperate community workers who wrote in every month for advice from Horace. In future, he suggests people contact their local TD or the ISPCA.

* This statement is an absolute lie!



Horace McDermott our good news correspondent

CDPs to be retained and doubled in number

There was a typo in last year's McCarthy Report. In the line which read, in relation to CDPs and the like, “There is little evidence of positive outcomes,” it should have read “loads of” instead of “little”.

Therefore, the Government, accepting McCarthy's typist made a boo-boo, has decided to double by the end of this year the number of CDPs nationwide.

The number of Partnership companies is also to be doubled. They will still be encouraged to merge, and where they do, staff salaries will be doubled.

The expansion is being funded after the Department of Finance sent a crack commando unit into Anglo-Irish Bank to rescue €22billion it gave them last year (the commandos found it in the staff canteen in a biscuit tin).

Sun will shine every day from now on

Due to global warming and Government intervention (with EU support) clouds will now only appear at night time, meaning people won't have anything to complain about during the summertime from now on.

A Government spokesman said this justified the Dail taking a long summer break – it was just too darn hot in there.

Recession is over as leisure industry booms

You've probably heard the recession is over, but the latest report by the IMF (Information-Making Falsehoods) shows that there was never a recession at all.

“During the so-called recession, hundreds of thousands of people were given their lives back, given extended holidays and extra downtime. Others referred to this as unemployment, but it's actually a massive explosion in the leisure industry with 450,000 people now enjoying more leisure time.

“We know this is welcomed by many people opting for long-term unemployment, finding the lifestyle more attractive than long-term slave-labour.”

The INOU said it intended to rename itself as the Irish National Organisation of Happy People (INOHP).

He also said it meant that the Met Office will now close during the summer months, now that our weather has been brought under control.

Minister Mary Harney is now being praised for her move earlier this year to ban sunbeds – she showed incredible foresight.

With the money saved on electricity for sunbeds, the Government announced extra funding for ice-cream and suntan lotion manufacturers.

Prediction: Ireland perfectly poised for Smart Economy

Alec is to replace Jack as the most popular boys' name in Ireland as parents try to give their children an edge in the smart economy.

Further evidence that we are embracing the smart economy is the expansion of ‘Head Shops’. It's also evident in the success of Irish comedians which proves that academic achievement is not as important as being a smart arse when it comes to making money.



In May and June, the 'Don't Cut the Grassroots' campaign reached many politicians and resulted in lobbying and querying of the Minister's policy in relation to funding for CDPs in disadvantaged areas.

The petition – signed online and in hard copies by around 2,600 people – noted that the Community Development Programme has been discontinued. It stated that, "local people will lose the control and management of local projects... This will mean that the ability to critique and challenge statutory organisations and Government for their failure to address embedded poverty, social exclusion and inequality will be stifled."

It urged people to sign up if they believed "that the retention of this element of civil society is important" and to call on the Minister to continue to fund CDPs.

The text introducing people to the petition incorrectly claimed that under the new Programme, CDPs were obliged to transfer their assets to Local Development Companies. The Department made clear months ago that assets do not have to transfer.

Nonetheless, current policy will, according to the National Community Development Forum, see the end of independent Community Development at local level.

According to a spokesperson, "The 'Don't Cut the Grassroots' was undertaken to show the strength of feeling that is out there amongst communities about their loss of opportunity to influence the work designed to meet their needs and the ability to critique the government on their failure to address persistent social issues such as racism, poverty and social exclusion."

Here, we give a flavour of the comments people made on the petition.

More info: www.ipetitions.com

Comments: ONE-LINERS

Keep community work owned by its beneficiaries.
- Emma Maguire on Jun 10

Respect the needs of the people and their communities.

- Nura Hagi on Jun 15

Keep up the good work CDP's and stand firm!!
- Ann Lacey on Jun 15

Participation is a key human rights principle, as well as making practical sense.

- Miriam Titterton on May 28

Don't destroy years of valuable community work and infrastructure!

- Niamh Wogan on May 27

I have benefitted hugely from involvement in my local Community Development organisation. Hands off!!!!

- Tomás Ó Combhain on May 26

The shit is really starting to hit the fan now lads, the cuts have only just begun.

- Suzanne Daly on May 26

Run this country properly and look after the people who make things happen and give people belief!!

- Darren Lacey on May 28

Shut down the CDPs and this country may as well open the Work Houses.

- Una McCrory on May 31

Bonsai tree, strong root!

- Git O Reilly, on Jun 1

Let Local people maintain their voice in their community.

- Deirdre Kirk on Jun 1

In order to have participatory democracy as stated in the White Paper Independence and autonomy is essential! Consultation.

- Jackie Kane on May 28

CDPs are essential in sustaining the vibrancy and responsiveness of local communities.

- M Murphy on May 31

How dare they! We should start now to get very angry.

- Geraldine Williams on Jun 5

Comments: in favour of local voluntary management

We should be investing more in this area, and the people who have all the grass-roots understandings and knowledge, not closing them.

- Thomond Coogan on May 28

The local voluntary Management Committee are in touch with the locals of the community and know what the community want and need.

- Louise Canavan on May 29

Within my CDP 80% of volunteers have already stated that they will withdraw from voluntary work if that work is to be dictated by our local partnership instead of the bottom up approach which deals with local needs.

- Mary Byrne on Jun 1

Community development only works if the community has a direct involvement in its management and organisation.

- Elaine Doyle on Jun 11

Comments: came from Bray to Brussels

BRUSSELS

From our office in Brussels, we really support the participation of people from the most marginalised communities.

- Lies Beumens, Samenlevingsopbouw Vlaanderen on May 28

WATERFORD CITY

Ballybane (in Waterford city) needs its independent community development project. It's our only voice.

- Kathleen Doherty on May 27

LIFFORD, CO. DONEGAL

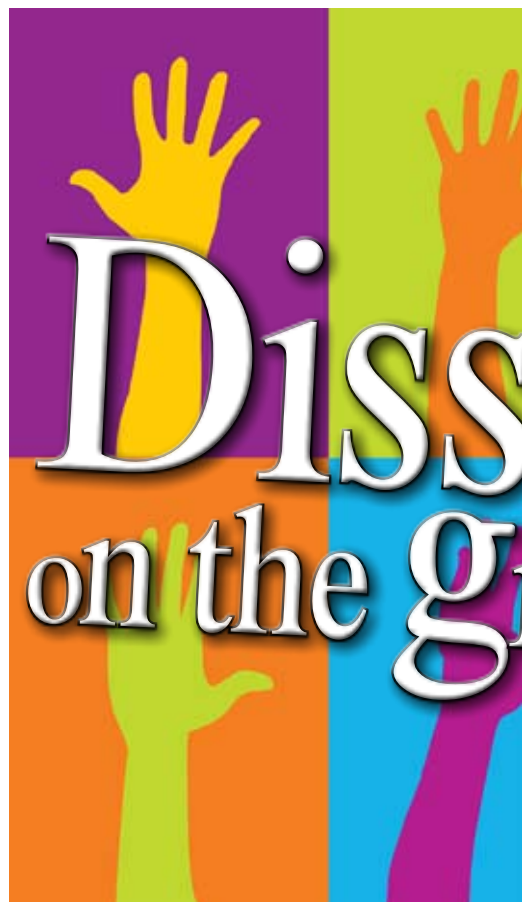
I work with the HSE and have a close working relationship with the Resource Centre in Lifford. The work and dedication shown by those who work there is first class and I feel that the loss of this programme would be a huge loss to the local community.

- Marie Conwell on May 28

LIMERICK CITY

Don't take power from local communities and thousands of volunteers by making funding conditional (on the volunteers agreeing to) abolish their companies...

- St. Munchin's CDP on Jun 23



BRAY, CO. WICKLOW

I have seen the work that has been done in the Little Bray area over the past 20 years and without these services in the Fassaroe estate I dread to think what might return to the area. A great bunch of people who always have their community at heart.

- Tony Mac Manus on May 27

KILBARRACK, DUBLIN

I am a single mother now and four of my children attend the after school project. I am very worried that if the CDP goes my kids will lose their place. The CDP is the best thing that happened to Kilbarrack

- Jean Marsh on May 27



Community **Voices:** On CDPs and the LCDP

GALWAY CITY

Its a crying shame that after all these years working with the Galway Traveller Movement community development project and Travellers working with Travellers that the government is talking about shutting us down, We never had much opportunities or access to education & employment until we got involved in community development. Community development is the way forward for Travellers without it we will have nothing and all thats been done and achieved will be for nothing. I am a community employment Supervisor with the GTM and I am here 13 years I have had to work hard to get to where I am.

- *Julia Sweeney on May 28, 2010*



INCHICORE, DUBLIN

I am a resident of St. Michaels Estate whose been let down by this government 4 times for regeneration....the local cdp has been at the heart of the regeneration....the idea that this project could be dismantled and forced to go under the partnership is beyond any wise thinking.

- *Caroline McNulty on May 31*

Comments: on losing grassroots participation and voice

Just as the breakdown of regulation led to disastrous consequences in the financial sector, the stifling of independent voices would be disastrous for the state sector. Whether they realise it or not.

- *Dave Donnellan on Jun 13, 2010*

Autonomy of grass roots organisations is an integral and fundamental part of democracy - take away autonomy and you take away peoples voices!!!!

- *Elaine D'Alton on Jun 3, 2010*

The only way to develop a more inclusive society to is hear the voices of the marginalised directly in society. Not indirectly. Not through representatives who are well-intentioned but who do not know personally that experience. Don't sideline or silence the voices of the marginalised.

- *Collette O'Regan on May 28*

This is simply wrong (economically and socially). Any politician of vision could not countenance such a move.

- *Denis Meehan on Jun 6*

The voice of the people cannot be ignored. Roots can only be fed from the bottom up!! FEED THE ROOTS!!!

- *Ciara Coy on Jun 8*

It does not make economic sense. For every €8 per person that is received in funding saves the Government €7 by people not accessing Government services.

- *Marion Jameson on May 31*

The government continues to undermine and neutralise community development and communities and attack our ability to organise for ourselves.

- *Brenda Harvey on Jun 10*

Comments: from people who work alongside CDPs

I have worked within the Community Development Programme, mostly in a training and support role for 8 years. I have also worked within a local partnership company for some 3 years. I am extremely concerned... My experience has been that while the vast majority of Community Development Projects have delivered extraordinary value for money, Partnership Companies are top heavy with their administrative costs dwarfing any funding they dispense.

- *Colleen Boyle on May 30*

I know from years of experience of working with CDPs that they provide a very valuable local infrastructure for communities to have a voice and develop effective local responses to many issues. If dismantled now it will take considerably more resources to reestablish them in years to come when inevitably they or a structure like them will be identified as necessary to community development across the country.

- *Pat Tobin on Jun 13, 2010*

Comments: on social justice and equality

Support an Irish Society where there is equality of access, opportunity and outcomes for all. Challenge injustice and ensure that our institutions are held accountable for good practice.

- *Margaret O'Riada on May 31*

This Government action is a contravention of the right to development (UN Declaration 4th December 1986), a right acknowledged as an inalienable human right... This type of action leaves this government open to allegations of violations of the right to development and should be raised by NGOs with the UN's Human Rights Council at the 12th Periodic Review Session in 2011 when Ireland's human rights record will be reviewed.

- *Siobhan Airey on May 26, 2010*

Comments: from academics

Community Development Projects are essential to democracy and citizen rights in Ireland.

- *Ronit Lentin on May 28*

These cuts... reflect an attack on the principles of community control and participation, and should be reversed immediately.

- *Rosie Meade on May 28*

Community development programmes and projects at the heart of local democracy. They give a voice to people who have no voice; they are dynamic, highly cost effective organisations doing necessary work. There is no case for scaling them down or closing them down. They must be protected and sustained not only because of their unique contribution to their own communities but in order to protect democracy itself.

- *Professor Kathleen Lynch on May 26, 2010*

Community Development Projects play a vital role in supporting and enabling people to overcome the destructive effects of poverty, marginalisation and social injustice. In this time of slash-backs in government expenditure on mainstream social protection, more funding and resources, rather than less, should be made available to these projects to continue their important work.

- *Dr Aileen O'Gorman, Lecturer In Community Development, UCD on Jun 6, 2010*

Comments: on Community Development

This move to close independent community development projects and to ultimately stamp on the participation of local people in decision-making which affects them contradicts the spin of 'active citizenship'. Local development and community development are not the same. Local development will not deliver lasting change in the lives of marginalised communities. Good community development will. Allow communities determine their own needs and responses to those needs through community development approaches and methods.

- *Oonagh Mc Ardle on May 26, 2010*

A core element of the community development approach is to empower marginalised communities to influence decisions that impact on their lives. Shutting down CDP's will further alienate those communities... I hope that the Minister sees sense before it's too late!

- *Anne Costello on May 27*

Plenty questions for POBAL at national meeting

- Day of workshops as projects prepare for transfers

PERSONAL REFLECTION

There was a mixture of enthusiasm, and caution over the course of the four workshops, and while the question and answer sections were active, at times people felt that the questions they most wanted to ask were not able to be addressed (e.g. legal implications of certain funding arrangements). This was seen as a drawback.

Many speakers acknowledged the depth of concern they had for the future, under conditions of imposed change, and that the workshops only seemed to acknowledge one model.

Pobal say that, to their knowledge at the time, they were aware of submissions for alternative models, but that these had not been decided on yet.

There was also dissatisfaction that DCEGA had made payment for the next period conditional on submitting a transfer/merger plan, which felt like more pressure to comply.

Jerry Murphy of Pobal indicated that if alternative models are approved groups will be free to use these plans to model their new organisation.

There were some discussions about bearing in mind the implications of delaying payments and how it can lead to concerns among projects over things like reckless trading.

Pobal said they would wish to avoid that, and hoped that no project would be left in this position.

A lot of people said that while they appreciated Pobal's time and effort, they were still in need of more clarifications and assurances in the future.

One group left in protest. The Clondalkin Travellers Development Group wrote to projects nationwide afterwards to explain why. They had not been allowed to ask questions that were important to the CTDG's board.

- Tim Hourigan

*Tim Hourigan reports **

Over 250 representatives of Community Development Projects and Local Development Companies turned up for the 'Outline of Transfer Events' workshops in Dublin, on June 10th.

The organisers acknowledged that there was a lot of strong feeling in the room about the upcoming changes to the programme, and certainly there were very active question and answer sessions after each workshop.

Pobal arranged four rotating workshops each addressing a different aspect of the expected transfers/mergers:

- General Requirements for transfers
- Due Diligence
- Protection of Employees
- Good Practice for Transfers/Mergers

PROTECTION OF EMPLOYEES IN TRANSFERS

One of the workshops, presented by Gillian O'Callaghan a solicitor with IBEC, dealt with legal issues relating to transfer of employees and the protections that exist in law for employees being transferred.

A transfer, by itself, cannot be used as an opportunity to dismiss staff, and the the terms and

THE CENTRE FOR EF – and their right to st

*By Juan Carlos Azzopardi **

CDPs and others, including this magazine, have criticised the Centre for Effective Services (CES) for their silence amid the controversy that has ensued since the Minister of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (at the time), John Curran announced the new Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) with the merger of the Community Development Programme and the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme. The criticism has included some questioning over the continued funding of CES.

It has been hard for CDPs to understand why CES, as the organisation responsible for reviewing the old programmes and designing the new single programme, have had nothing to say on the LCDP or defended their work since the "validation" workshops they held in October. However, the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs has recently shed light on the reluctance of CES to engage in the debate that has been ongoing since the presentation of the new Programme at Croke Park on November 2009.

The Department officials clarified that the remit of CES was for a specific purpose, namely to carry out a review of the design of LDSIP and CDP and devise programme frameworks based on international best practice. **

While the redesign work was linked to structural re-alignment/merger the final decision to merge both programmes was taken by the then Minister,

John Curran. The CES was then required to devise a framework for one amalgamated programme. CES claim and this is verified by the Department that they had no role in recommending the merger of both programmes – this was entirely a political decision made by the Minister.

REJECTION V ACCEPTANCE

Once the Minister made this decision the CES could focus on the redesign of a single, integrated programme. This they did, proposing a new name, one over-arching objective and four programme goals.

CES discussed these with the Department who indicated their approval and then CES presented them at a second validation workshop to a representative collection of people from projects funded under both the LDSIP and the CDP where they were broadly rejected. The Minister however, accepted in its entirety, the CES recommendation and instructed his officials and POBAL to put the structures in place to set up the new LCDP and administer and support the changes required.

Once the CES recommendation for the new Programme design was accepted that aspect of their remit was completed and there is no expectation on the part of the Department for them to act as advocates/publicists for the new LCDP. The new programme has not met with universal approval and the previous and current Ministers, their officials and now POBAL have had to deal with the anger and

conditions of staff cannot be reduced as a result of a transfer,

Pensions are not usually transferred to the new company and one should check with the pension company to see what the new arrangements are.

The speaker was unable to answer some specific questions as she had only received her brief recently and wasn't able to comment on things such as funding, the status of CE workers being paid through an outside agency, and people working on the rural support scheme. Redundancy payments were also outside the scope of the workshop, as it did not include anything relating to funding.

DUE DILIGENCE PROCESS

Andreas McConnell of Philip Lee Solicitors dealt with the process of due diligence, which is the process of evaluating and agreeing the assets and liabilities to be transferred.

He gave some tips for preparing the due diligence for the transfer:

- Centralise the process, by appointing no more than 2 people to deal with the evaluation and listing of assets and liabilities that will be included (whether all or some).

- Identify all 3rd party consents (e.g. landlords, software license holders) and make plans towards obtaining that consent.

Keep all books and records up to date.

There were questions about this, including whether part of a title could be transferred (e.g. if a project was only part-owner of a building - the reply was 'Yes!')

The speaker made a fleeting reference to an advisory paper he had prepared called 'The Urge to Merge - Making the Case for the four week merger of CDPs and LDCs.'

This document is available on request from Pobal.

GOOD PRACTICE FOR TRANSFERS/ MERGERS

Margaret Barry from Corporate Community spoke about managing change and cultures in the case of transfers or mergers. She advised people to be aware of opportunities, and challenges, to bear in mind that uncertainty is hard to manage, and change can lead to defensiveness and anxiety.

Celebrating the achievements and taking time to acknowledge the losses was also important, she said.

Attendees were cautioned not to wait until they know everything before talking about change, because with major changes, there will be some uncertainties that may not be resolved for a long time. Instead, they should communicate what they know, when they have an idea of the short-term impacts to staff, communities, volunteers and boards

of management.

The advice was also to be alert for how well people integrate, whether old pecking orders or cultures continue in the new body. It is common for some people to leave whenever there is a major merger and it is important to manage it well. If someone is leaving, find out why, and be active in discovering how people feel within the new structure.

TRANSFER REQUIREMENTS & SUPPORTS

Jerry Murphy and Jimmy Lynch of Pobal spoke about transfer requirements and supports.

They emphasised that the transfers should be agreed between the CDP and LCDP, and that there is no requirement to transfer assets that are not programme related.

For groups going for the full transfer, the plans needed to be agreed, signed by all parties, and submitted by the LDC to the local Pobal Regional Case Officer by June 30th.

Pobal hoped to tender for centralised conveyancing services for transfers of property.

* Tim Hourigan is a part-time administrator with 'Changing Ireland'.

EFFECTIVE SERVICES

Silence

CENTRE FOR EFFECTIVE SERVICES

Connecting science, policy and practice to improve outcomes for children and communities

disappointment of CDPs in particular who have been very critical of the manner and the content of Minister Curran's decision. It is clear also that the new Minister Pat Carey will not be changing this policy position.

SUBSEQUENT SILENCE

The CES are not required to justify the Minister's decision and as an independent body are actually expected not to. Though many will take issue with this, from a Department point of view any criticism of the CES for their subsequent silence is unwarranted and misdirected.

One may attempt to criticise CES for their understanding of the Irish context, their methodology or the content of what they produced, but they cannot be criticised because the Minister took their advice nor because they have not become a champion for the programme they devised. CDPs and others may not like it but that's the way it is.

* Juan Carlos Azzopardi is a member of the 'Changing Ireland' editorial team and is the project co-ordinator with the Community Development Network Moyross Ltd.

** More specifically the CES remit was to:

- Assist the Department with planning for future delivery and development of LDSIP

and CDP by collating and making available international evidence of good practice and 'what works' in similar community-based initiatives, and review the design of the existing programme in the light of this evidence.

- ◆ Inform policy and practice relating to LDSIP and CDP with the aim of maximising programme impact and effectiveness within existing funding parameters.
- ◆ Promote access to expertise for developing appropriate evaluation methodologies and measures for the evaluation of local services delivered under the programmes, and make recommendations for subsequent evaluation design(s).
- ◆ Assist the Department to build internal and external capacity for evidence-based design and delivery of other related services and programmes.

Editor's note: On June 1st, Fine Gael's Michael Ring asked a Dail question of Minister Pat Carey in relation to CES regarding the company's background and State funding for it. Minister Carey gave a detailed reply. More info: www.kildarestreet.com

Former Pobal manager gives his view



Former Pobal senior management member Aiden Lloyd has written a critical article looking at decisions that have been taken in relation to CDPs and in particular the role played by the Centre for Effective Services.

He suggested that the €2.6m being invested in CES by the Government should be reinvested in supporting communities on the ground.

'Changing Ireland' put Aidan's question to Minister Pat Carey recently asking should the agreement with the CES be revisited and the money invested in communities in a different way.

Minister Carey replied: "Every single budget headline heading is being visited at this moment to get the best possible value."

Aidan's full article is published in the latest edition of the Community Workers Co-op newsletter, available on their website: www.cwc.ie

Meanwhile, the CES is due in a matter of weeks to publish a report on the 'Effectiveness of publicly funded Community Development programmes'.

Adult education: Labre Park to Ethiopia

By Colin Murphy

Anne Garvey has a trick she uses to show her classes how the world's riches are divided. She uses chairs to represent each continent's resources, and then divides the class amongst them to represent population. North America ends up with two students stretched across a row of chairs; Africa is one chair with three people trying to balance on it.

The groups she does this with are always immediately struck by the visible disparity. But when Anne tried this exercise with a group of women involved in the Ballyfermot Travellers Action Project, there was little response.

"They already accepted that the world's resources were very unequally divided," she says. "It didn't surprise them."

The women were doing an adult education course, and as part of it Anne facilitated a class on development education, focussing on issues of global justice, human rights and poverty.

The subject typically focuses on poor countries, but Anne's initial attempts to discuss overseas aid with the women met with a guarded response.



When she first raised overseas aid, she was asked: "Why are we sending people over to the developing world to build houses, and sink wells, and provide electricity, when we don't have those in Labre Park?"

Labre Park, in Ballyfermot, is the oldest halting site in Ireland and it's where a number of the women live. Conditions there are at times deplorable.

DESPITE INITIAL SCEPTICISM

Despite the initial scepticism in the group, Garvey persisted, and the issues of houses, water, electricity were the key.

Unlike most Irish people, the Traveller women didn't take these for granted, and could easily see how they were connected to poverty in poorer countries.

One of the group, though, was already well versed in issues of "Third World" poverty. Margaret Anne O'Brien had been fundraising for aid projects in Ethiopia for almost a decade. In total she's raised over €30,000 for charities at home and abroad.

In the last couple of years, her contributions have funded a new floor for a local school in Ethiopia and helped to build homes for eight families there.

Now, she and her colleagues can talk with experience having been to the school and having met the families they helped. (See the accompanying report on the trip).

Travellers visit Ethiopia to support development work

By Colin Murphy

Fundraising is all very well, but Margaret Anne O'Brien had been fundraising for aid projects in Ethiopia for almost a decade and she wanted to see where her money was going. That was easy with the Irish-based charities she also supported, but trickier with Ethiopia.

An initial plan to visit the project there, seven years ago, fell through. And then Margaret joined the adult education group in Ballyfermot.

The philosophy of adult education, says Anne Garvey, is "action learning" and she found this was ideally suited to the women in Ballyfermot.

"They don't like sitting in the classroom for long periods – they learn more from action and activities."

Anne decided that the ideal way for the group to learn about life in poorer countries would be to visit one. At around the same time, someone else had a similar idea. Fr. Stephen Monaghan, a former parish priest with the Travelling community, had become involved in missionary work (with the Vincentian Lay Missionaries) and was looking for a way to involve Travellers in his work. He recruited Margaret to fundraise and when she said the Ballyfermot group were interested in going to Ethiopia, he determined to organise the trip.

Soon the group were busy preparing learning, fundraising, and getting dreaded vaccinations and anti-malarial prescriptions. In May, they finally took off.

They are, as far as they know, the first representatives of Ireland's Travelling community to visit aid projects in Africa. They spent ten days in Ethiopia, landing in the capital, Addis Ababa, then made the eight-hour journey by road to the city of Jimma, in the south west, where they visited a women's group in a leprosy project set up originally by an Irish sister.

Then they drove to Ambo in central Ethiopia, where Margaret and her friends' money has helped with the building of a school and funded a feeding programme for poor children.

"I've been looking forward to this for years," said Margaret prior to departure. "I'm going over to see what more we can do for them."

The next stage for the group, now that they've returned, is to take their experiences to other community groups and into classrooms. They plan to do workshops and talks on their visit to Ethiopia, drawing on their own experiences as Travellers in Ireland to illuminate them.

For Anne, this is the



Margaret Ann O'Brien with a village resident in Ethiopia. Photo by: Marie Cash

most radical aspect of the project.

"There's a colonial or superior attitude in a lot of charity, without people even being aware of it – the idea that it's all about 'poor people' who need to be 'helped'.

"Traditionally, aid is seen as rescuing people who are drowning. But what needs to be asked is, why are people falling into the river?"

"We need to hear the voices of marginalised groups themselves. Having a Traveller voice on development issues could help to give us that.

"At the same time, they'll be educating people about Traveller culture, and placing it in an international context."

To hear how the group got on in Ethiopia, you can listen into a 10-minute documentary by Ronan Kelly (narrated by Colin Murphy). It's online at:

http://www.rte.ie/radio1/doconone/docs_curiosear.html.

There's also a website for the group (in progress) here: <http://travellertraveling.wordpress.com/>

The Ballyfermot Travellers' Action Project (BTAP) development education group who travelled to Ethiopia were: Marie Cash, Elizabeth

Moorehouse, Eileen Berry, Margaret Anne O'Brien, Anne Garvey and

Elizabeth Cash. The BTAP is a Community Development Project.

Colin Murphy's coverage and work with the Ballyfermot group was supported by Irish Aid's Simon Cumbers Media Challenge Fund.

"We need to hear the voices of marginalised groups themselves. Having a Traveller voice on development issues could help to give us that."



An Interview With a Community Activist In Prison

A trawler-fisherman from north Mayo, Pat O'Donnell was imprisoned in connection with his opposition to Shell's plans for his area. He was given a 7-month sentence last February for "breaching the peace" and "obstructing a Garda".

'Changing Ireland' interviewed the jailed community activist in June, a month before he was due for release. However, it was not easy.

We posted Pat a letter putting interview questions to him, but according to Pat, the management at Casterea Prison confiscated the letter. We posted another letter. Same story. (On the second occasion, Pat was given a magazine that was in the same envelope as the letter).

We have written to the prison service to ask what happened our interview questions.

Meanwhile, we persevered and Pat's wife Mary put our questions to her husband on a visit and relayed back the answers to our office.

Pat was released on July 17th as our magazine went to print.

Questions: 'Changing Ireland'

Answers: Pat O'Donnell, Castlereagh Prison

How are you?
"I'm fine."

How are you spending your time while in prison?

"Keeping busy, availing of facilities here like the gym."

What is your relationship with the other prisoners like?

"Very good, they have respect for me."

What do the other prisoners think of your being in prison?

"They think it's a joke, they find it difficult to understand."

Have you anything to say on why you were jailed for "breaching the peace" and "obstruction of a Garda"?

"I was jailed on the word of a garda, no evidence."

Is it true that Minister Eamon O'Cuiv called to your family home after your jailing?

"Yes, he called to see the fish factory we operate, a crap plant that Mary and I are directors which employs six people. It's called Porturlin Shell Fish Plant and adjoins our family home."

How do you feel about Judge Groarke's labelling of you as "a thug and a bully"?

"I was upset by that. The judge did not know me, he relied on the gardai to describe me."

In your opinion, have proper investigations been carried out into alleged Garda assaults on you and in relation to the sinking of your boat? Yes/No?

"No."

Do you feel the courts have been even-handed in their approach to dealing with charges against protestors compared to how the courts treat allegations against the Gardai, or Shell security? Yes/No?

"No."

Have the imprisonments of community activists like yourself scared other activists off, or attracted more people to the campaign?

"Probably a bit of both."

How successful has the community campaign against Shell's plans been in general?

"Very successful."

What is the first thing you would change now if you could change anything?

"I would give the rights of the gas and oil back to the rightful owners, the Irish people."

Has the community begun to heal since the campaign has slowed down after changing Shell's plans?

"No the healing will still take a very long time."

Is there any message you would like to give to 'Changing Ireland' readers?

"Never be afraid to stand up for what you believe to be right and to highlight wrongs that are being done."

Finally, asked had Minister Eamon O'Cuiv been of help or otherwise to the community, Pat replied "Yes and No." He suggested that Minister Pat Carey "should listen to the concerns of the people directly affected."

Due to the way in which the interview was conducted, we couldn't ask follow up questions.

Thanks to Mary O'Donnell for her help in conducting this interview.



Pat O'Donnell walks free.

Dept. working to Resolve Issues in Erris

The Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs has been involved in recent years in directly trying to find for a solution to the environmental/community/national issues at stake in north Mayo.

While Minister Pat Carey declined to publicly comment on Pat O'Donnell's imprisonment in an interview in June with 'Changing Ireland', he did say his officials are "working on the ground" in the hope of bringing about a resolution that would help the community to move forward.

He said he and Minister Eamon Ryan were working to "try and move the situation forward, resolve it if possible, to most people's satisfaction, there (being) some I don't think will ever be satisfied."

"I'd hope that if it's possible to agree on planning issues there, the healing process in the community can begin. There are friends who've been separated and communities that have been split and that's to nobody's advantage."

The Minister referred to the North West Mayo Forum, which is separate from the planning and statutory consent processes, and was established in 2008 by the Minister for Communications Energy and Natural Resources and the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs with the following two objectives.

1. To offer a positive opportunity for furthering the socio-economic development of the North West Mayo Region, through a co-ordinated engagement involving a number of Government Departments and State bodies, with members of the local community and their public representatives.

2. To provide an opportunity for dialogue between all parties with an interest in the project and to help promote understanding of how the Corrib Project is regulated, by providing the local community and their public representatives with an opportunity for a co-ordinated engagement with the Government Departments and other State bodies that have a regulatory role in relation to the project.

The Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs reports that, "At the last meeting of the Forum on 8 May 2010, the future direction of the Forum was considered; it was agreed that there was a need to refocus the work of the Forum and initiate a more bottom-up approach. The 'Communities Future' approach adopted in other areas of Mayo was considered to be an appropriate model for leveraging a greater engagement at community level."

Speedpak focus on people facing most barriers



Speedpak worker Monica Kelleher.

In recent years, Speedpak in Coolock in north Dublin has concentrated on taking on people who are “facing the most barriers to getting a job.”

The company was set up by the Northside Partnership and representatives of the local business community in Coolock, Dublin and is a social enterprise which provides short periods of employment and FETAC-accredited training for long-term unemployed people.

“Even during the ‘Celtic Tiger’ years, the people we were working with were competing with a very

educated labour force,” said manager John Murphy.

He acknowledged it’s going to be very difficult now to find people jobs, but he remains optimistic.

“We’ve a double bottom line; we’ve a commercial remit and a social remit. It means we produce rosettes and pack things to employ people, not the other way around.”

“We organise tailor-made training for individual employees through our links to the Northside Partnership,” continued John.

“Our philosophy is we don’t send someone for training, they have to

earn the right to the training, because otherwise without for example good time-keeping, the skills you learn are no good.”

In recent years, the company developed a new way of measuring an employee’s progress. They call it the “distance travelled approach”.

Every four months, each employee is assessed on 80 indicators, covering their skills, education, behaviour and performance. So Speedpak can demonstrate even if the person hasn’t got another job, that they’ve progressed.

The company is planning to sell its ‘Workplace Accreditation Model’ as a commercial product to other social enterprises.

So impressed was the Arthur Guinness Fund with the company that it picked Speedpak out as one of ten national winners this year and awarded the company €100,000.

Only 10% of people employed in Speedpak have the Leaving Cert when they join. The ‘Leaving’ is considered a basic by most employers and the company is working towards providing people with a Leaving Cert standard of education by the time they finish in Speedpak.

The company employs an occupational therapist to assist in providing the training.

Trainee Monica Kelleher from Darndale said she was “nervous” at the start, but loves her work in Speedpak now, while her colleague Christine Kenny also from Darndale said she left school early and had been unemployed for a few years when she started with the company. She listed the courses she is now doing, talked of her five-year plan and said: “I’d want to get a full-time job like this where everyone gets on well.”

Joe Reynolds from Darndale said the employees look out for each other and Phyllis Duffy from Coolock remarked on the positive approach by the bosses made everyone work harder.

www.speedpak.ie

www.shamrockrosettes.com



John Murphy, social enterprise manager

A model social enterprise

Speedpak Ltd in Coolock is “a bridge to employment” for local people, says manager John Murphy.

The company has 800 customers and runs two businesses - rosette manufacturing and contract packing and 40% of its income comes from sales. It receives support from local businesses, FAS, the Community Services Programme and the Arthur Guinness Fund, among others.

For more information, contact John Murphy. T: 01-8671707.

E: HYPERLINKmailto:info@speedpak.ie

65,000 social enterprise jobs possible

Community and social enterprise projects could provide up to 65,000 jobs nationally, according to a report published in June by the Task Force on Social Enterprise.

There are currently around 30,000 people employed through social and/or community enterprises in Ireland, representing 3% of national economic output.

To download the full 16-page report, visit our blog: www.changingireland.blogspot.com

Warmer Homes Scheme

The Warmer Homes Scheme delivers energy efficiency through a network of 21 regional community-based organisations. One of these is the Clondalkin Home Improvements Project (CHIP) in Dublin. It was formed in 1997, employs 25 people and last year it insulated over 1500 homes for people at risk of fuel poverty.



Common Ground

Common Ground is a not-for-profit arts agency in the Canal Partnership area of Dublin. It is 12 years old and believes that arts can play an important role in the social regeneration of communities. Common Ground has received support from Accenture, a company with offices in Dublin, including in-kind benefits, representation on the board and a donation of €75,000 spread over three years.



Credit Unions

A number of credit unions have assisted with social enterprise formation.

- Avonmore Credit Union in Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow, provided €100,000 for a community crèche employing six people.
- Monaghan Credit Union was involved in the creation of a community centre with a childcare facility and educational programmes for residents.



What role can WE play in developing social enterprises?

Asks Ger Doyle



Ger Doyle

INTRODUCTION

In Ger Doyle's first article (Issue 32, pages 19-21) he gave real examples from Ireland, England and Scotland of how social enterprises work in communities. Ger hoped to encourage cash-strapped communities to see new ways to develop their economies and also deliver services.

In doing so, they will promote collective approaches to economic development.

In the second of his two-part report, Ger outlines what the State and others need to do at national and local level to make it happen.

For the record, social enterprise is defined as a business formed to provide employment, services or create income for community benefit. It does not necessarily make a profit.

THERE'S A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE NEAR YOU

Social enterprises are present in most urban disadvantaged communities in Ireland, for example, community childcare projects, community launderettes and community cafes.

When they're located in disadvantaged communities, social enterprises can encounter a number of constraints including:

- Difficulty in accessing finance to establish and grow social enterprises.
- The lack of business and professional expertise within disadvantaged communities.
- The view among many policy makers and government officials that economic development can only be delivered by private businesses.
- The lack of supports allocated to social

enterprises compared to those afforded to private enterprises, making it difficult for them to grow.

- The State reducing or withdrawing funding from regeneration programmes prematurely.

"This approach would contribute to a more equal Ireland."

5 GOOD REASONS TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY ENTERPRISES

However, it is in the interests of the State to provide greater assistance to disadvantaged communities in their efforts to develop social enterprises:

1. The formation of social enterprises can enable state agencies and local authorities to achieve their targets as detailed for them in a number of policy frameworks (e.g. the National Anti-Poverty Strategy).
2. In particular, social enterprises reduce the numbers of people on the dole, and provide people on society's margins such as drug users in recovery and ex-prisoners with an opportunity to get work experience, acquire new skills and be in a position to secure employment.
3. They can also enable State agencies to get greater value for the money in procuring a range of services. This is because social enterprises' mission is less about making profit and more about improving the quality of life of people they provide services to.
4. Social enterprises which provide maintenance, security and property management services on behalf of local authorities can also contribute to ensuring that neighbourhoods which have benefited from physical regeneration programmes are sustainable and do not require further capital investment from the State.
5. Through their knowledge of the areas in which they are based, social enterprises are better placed than private enterprises to provide a range of care services for older people and people with disabilities.

HERE'S WHAT WOULD MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

If social enterprises are to play a more significant role in transforming local disadvantaged communities, it will be necessary for Central Government to develop a strategic policy framework which will enable communities to be empowered to develop their economies. This will need to include the following components:

- A grant finance fund which would allow social enterprises to be established and grow.
- Legislation to compel state agencies to procure a proportion of their services from social enterprises – as is the case in Italy.
- A strategy for the transfer of the State's obsolete assets, such as buildings, to recognised community trusts which would assist communities in generating income.
- A social enterprise innovation fund to enable social enterprises to conduct market research and bring social enterprises from concept to trading stage.
- A training programme for key staff in government departments and State agencies so that they champion social enterprise development within their respective organisations.
- An instruction from central Government to State agencies to view social enterprises as important stakeholders in regenerating local economies.
- The definition and measurement of social enterprises' sustainability not in financial terms alone, but also including the extent to which it achieves social sustainability, attains financial sustainability and is environmentally sustainable.
- Alliances can be formed with large-scale private businesses with a view to securing a range of expertise and funding.

In conclusion, social enterprises can demonstrate that there is an approach to engaging in economic activity which is more humane and democratic than 'conventional' private enterprise and which is concerned with limiting income inequality between management and other employees. This approach would contribute to a more equal Ireland.

Will a year of talking about poverty make a difference?

- Over 350 attend seminars on poverty and social exclusion

By Gearoid Fitzgibbon

From May 11th to June 3rd, four regional seminars were held in Galway, Dundalk, Wexford and Cork, as part of Ireland's National Programme for the 2010 EU Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

A huge amount of work and preparation went into the seminars.

According to Community Workers' Co-op co-ordinator Ann Irwin, "We were taken aback at the turnout: 120 people attended the Cork seminar, with over 350 people attending nationally. People wanted to talk about the issues. It was a valuable opportunity for people who make policy and implement policy to talk face-to-face. Critical feedback centred around consultation fatigue: people need to see something concrete happen as a result."

A huge amount of work and preparation went into the seminars which comprised a morning of four workshops on the following themes:

1. Access to services – with a particular



- focus on older people;
2. People with disabilities;
3. Access to quality work and learning opportunities;
4. Child poverty

The workshops featured a presentation of good practice by a policy maker, followed by facilitated discussion. The main points of all four workshops were fed back to a wrap-up session.

It is not clear whether these seminars or the follow-up forum will have any impact on decisions being made in the December budget.

However, Chris O'Leary of Farranree CDP, who chaired the wrap up discussion, said: "Obviously there is a concern that this is going to be just a box-ticking exercise. However, the contributions from the participants were excellent. The seminar reports should be sent back out to see if anything was missed. Then people need to see action."

Paul O'Rawe, manager of South Kerry Development, organised a bus which brought staff, volunteers and students along: "It was worthwhile, but there should be an effort to promote more participation, especially for people from target groups who attend."

Miriam Holt of Waterford Women's Centre was aggrieved at the abolition of the CDP voluntary boards, which, she felt offered working class women an opportunity to directly represent themselves and their communities.

Mark Ryan of Tipperary RAPID Programme was encouraged by the large attendance, which showed the dedication of people. Mark who attended the Child Poverty workshop, was happy at the presence of a senior official from the Department of Education and Skills. He said, "Its important that the informal education sector is properly valued."

Presentations from the seminars and copies of the seminar report are available on request from CWC.

A report on the seminar outcomes will form the basis of the National Social Inclusion Forum to be held on November 17th.

EU year for combating poverty and exclusion

The seminar attended by 'Changing Ireland' was organised by the Community Workers Co-op, the European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland and the Community Platform, on contract from the Social Inclusion Division of the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs.

According to the advance literature, the seminars were "an opportunity to take stock on progress to date in the fight against poverty, as well as a moment for reflection and planning."

The stated objective of the seminars was to give "people experiencing poverty and social exclusion" a chance to "voice and articulate the issues they are facing," and make suggestions on how to deal with these issues "at local, national and international levels."

Minister Ó Cuív wants your ideas!!!!

The Minister for Social Protection Éamon Ó Cuív has indicated he would welcome suggestions from 'Changing Ireland' readers for changes he should make to the social welfare system.

He is specifically interested in making changes that would allow people work while claiming unemployment benefit, if that doesn't sound like a contradiction.

In an interview published in the spring edition, the Minister talked of his plans for supporting people on unemployment welfare who wish to work and help their communities at the

same time.

He would like to see volunteers on social welfare paid small amounts for engaging in community work without it interfering with their entitlements.

A few ideas volunteers with 'Changing Ireland' suggested include:

Guarantees that social welfare officers would not penalise people by deeming them "unavailable for work" when they are engaged in voluntary activity.

Free childcare places in local community crèches where someone gives up their time to engage in voluntary community work.

Payment of PRSI while someone is on long-term voluntary work placement.

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Comfort puts the spirit to sleep