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WINTER 2011 / 2012

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NEWS



Leaving Cork prison
Ballymun's big
exchange
Supporting Mayo
women
Arklow men in a boat



Open Fairs returning
Youths organising
Gaeltacht agitating
Mentors
volunteering



OPINION / DEBATE
• Challenges ahead
• Programme advice

Recession deepens, but we still can: **INSULATE OUR COMMUNITIES!**



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- ❄ TARGET ENERGY WASTE TO SPUR LOCAL ECONOMY
- ❄ INT'L CONFERENCE ON JOBS CRISIS
- ❄ MEDIA GUILTY OF STIGMATISING COMMUNITIES

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

Tipp parish targets energy waste to spur rural economy

A unique energy audit by community volunteers and development workers has found that a parish in County Tipperary spent over €1million last year to heat and power its 400 households, **REPORTS ALLEN MEAGHER.**

Thirty homes in the area had no insulation whatsoever while others were poorly insulated and were difficult, not to mind expensive, to heat. Much of the housing stock in the area dates back to before 1920.

“Cutting energy use by 25% would be the equivalent of a €250,000 investment. What are the chances of a company investing that much in a small local area in the current climate?” asked local development worker Gearóid Fitzgibbon.

His company North Tipperary LEADER Partnership and the self-styled Drombane Energy Team, hopes the local community (pop. 1000) see the savings to be made and invest in retrofitting and insulating their homes.

If so, locals will get the work and phase 2 of the project will be off the



ground.

The unique audit, available online (on.fb.me/drombanenrg) raised awareness about the existence of grants from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). Nine in every ten households in the rural district were informed they qualified for grant assistance for energy improvements: 82% for partial grants, 13% for the full Warmer Homes Scheme Grant.

The house-to-house survey was carried out by teams of volunteers from Drombane/Upperchurch using a mapping system designed by the local GAA club.

The combined voluntary efforts were equal to employing a full time community worker for eight months.

There was a very high response rate of 87% (350 out of 400 homes) and the finished report was launched in Drombane in October by SEAI boss Professor Owen Lewis.

According to local organiser Con Harrington: “Small communities like ours must take a self-help approach, and not wait on state initiatives. Local people know what is best for their

locality. If they take the first steps, state agencies will come on stream.”

One of the key partners on the project, Seamus Hoyne, manager of Tipperary Energy Agency (TEA) said: “In the current climate, money spent on conserving energy offers one of the best returns on investment because you make long-term savings.”

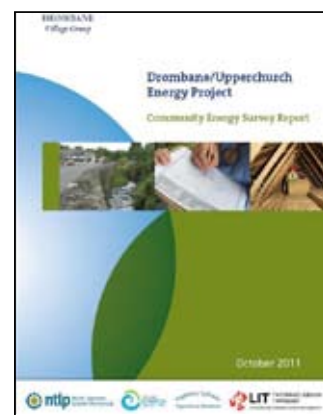
Mr Fitzgibbon (also chairperson of Changing Ireland Community Media Ltd) has worked with others on the project for nearly two years: “This project began with the question ‘What can we do to get something going in our community?’ In an age of energy scarcity and financial instability, it’s inspiring to see a community working to come up with its own answers. This survey has given us the data from which to launch Phase 2 of the Project – getting local people to invest and draw down grants, and getting the work done.”

The official launch in Drombane Hall came with a half-day information and advice clinic where staff from TEA gave householders confidential feedback one-to-one on their

individual surveys. They also got a chance to discuss options with certified energy and retrofit companies.

REPORT ONLINE

The report is available for download from www.upperchurch.ie and www.ntlp.ie People can also follow on “Drombane/Upperchurch Energy Team” facebook page.



BACKGROUND



Drombane/Upperchurch Energy Project was initiated in 2011 by Drombane Village Group, who sought to stimulate economic activity within their small rural community in mid-Tipperary. Following a number of community planning sessions facilitated by North Tipperary LEADER Partnership, energy was identified as an economic opportunity for the area.

Discussions were held with Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT) Tipperary, the Tipperary Energy Agency (TEA). They examined a number of options,

including energy generation, the development of wood heating projects, district heating opportunities, and investment in energy efficiency. On TEA's advice, the group decided initially to concentrate on energy conservation and efficiency. As a first step, the newly formed Energy Team decided to carry out a local community energy survey. The survey was devised with help from Julie Curtin, a student from LIT-Tipperary who also drafted and compiled the report findings.

* Similar work has been done in the towns of Clonakilty and Kinsale.

Wexford scheme has warmed 2,500 homes & created jobs

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

Around ten Local Development Companies (LDCs) are delivering the Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme around the country along with 20 other community-based organisations.

In Wexford, it's been such a success that Wexford Local Development (WLD) were invited to showcase their work at an OECD/Pobal conference held in Dublin in October to examine local responses to long-term unemployment.

They've made winters warmer for 2,500 households, created a half-dozen full-time jobs and train 25 people at a time (formerly long-term unemployed) in a jobs growth area.

If you qualify for the fuel allowance, own your own home and it was built before 2002, you qualify for WLD's retrofitting scheme.

The Warm Project surveys a home to see what energy efficiency measures are needed and can then step in with attic insulation, cavity wall insulation, draught proofing of doors and windows, installs lagging jackets, low energy light bulbs and provides energy advice to the householders.

Brian Kehoe, CEO of WLD, explained to people who visited his exhibition stand at the OECD/Pobal conference that nobody is displaced by the work since it delivers warmer homes to people who could not afford to pay for it themselves.

"A lot of the people who apply are elderly, long-term unemployed, or have disabilities, exactly the kind of people we want to support."

"If one person gets it done, a neighbour is likely to give us a call. And local social welfare offices help in getting the word out too," he said.

A study some years earlier found many people, particularly elderly, suffered health problems due to draughty and damp houses.

This Warm Project addresses the issue.

All participants on the project receive FETAC accredited training in "Installing Thermal Insulation" and also receive training in Health & Safety, Manual Handling, Safe Pass etc., and also received industry recognised training in cavity wall insulation.

Notwithstanding budget cuts, WLD would "embrace" the opportunity to up-skill its workforce and get them working on the installation of solar panels, renewable energy heating systems, rain water harvesting systems and external wall insulation.

The scheme is managed by WLD, working in partnership with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, FAS and other partners such as the ESB. Funding from SEAI for 2011 was approximately €520,000.

The Warm Project is an important part of WLD's labour market strategy under the LCDP.

www.wld.ie



Pictured above: Brian Kehoe, CEO of WLD, talking to 'Changing Ireland' editor Allen Meagher at the OECD conference. Credit: Derek Speirs.

COMMENTARY

Group insulation schemes can jumpstart your local economy!

Investing in home insulation and energy efficiency gives a better return than most other sorts of investments: it saves the householder money, it gives work to local contractors, it circulates money back into the local economy, and, from a national perspective, reduces our dependence on imported fossil fuels, and lowers our carbon emissions. It also counters fuel poverty, which affects 16 % of households (according to a 2001 survey), a figure that will have only increased since the recession.



Gearoid Fitzgibbon

Where once the case was made for such investment from a "green" perspective, it can now be proven from a purely financial point of view. Communities and community groups around the country are hungry for actions to boost the stagnant local economy.

With 20% of our energy consumed by households, communities and community groups are primed to play a huge role in transforming the energy profile of Ireland. Already a diverse number of communities have begun this work:

- Clonakilty in West Cork has set up "Sustainable Clonakilty" (www.sustainableclon.com),

- Dundalk Sustainable Energy Zone (an EU Commission funded project to showcase innovative technologies, policies and practices needed to develop sustainable energy communities), as well as Ballynagran, Co. Wicklow and Kinsale, Co. Cork.

- The Drombane\Upperchurch Community Energy Survey is another example, and shows the potential for engagement of local communities in these initiatives.

Community based energy conservation projects have a number of key ingredients, which can be replicated.

Research phase: collecting data to create a profile of your community's energy use and insulation levels; using advice and support from local agencies (academic institutions and local development companies can help here).

Action Phase: putting in place the resources to carry out the conservation work – (price reductions may be negotiated with energy insulation companies where groups of houses are clustered together).

In the current climate, finance for the required investment is an obstacle. Ireland does however have a network of community owned co-operative finance organisations – the local credit unions.

The Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, and POBAL should match the appetite for self-help of community groups by instructing LDCs to prioritise energy conservation work. It offers a guaranteed return.

insulate YOUR community



We're celebrating our tenth anniversary and have published a special double edition showcasing new approaches to social issues, volunteered action and work conducted under the Local and Community Development Programme.

Our cover photo highlights the potential to boost local economies through community-wide insulation and retrofitting programmes.

The social enterprise approach to retrofitting the homes of people on low incomes is supported in ten counties through the Local and Community Development Programme. Nationwide, there are 30 community-based organisations involved.

The best of these projects includes what's termed "labour-activation measures." In other words, long-term unemployed people receive on the job training, in this case in an industry that's been growing now for five years.

Insulating homes received a lot of media attention after the budget because of a 20% cut to the grants available. The glass was almost completely empty on the Joe Duffy Show.

However, the coverage heightened awareness of the existence of the grants (if you've missed seeing scaffolding up around older houses up and down the country).

The grants weren't always there, they won't last forever and it's a real positive if you can still apply to have your home retrofitted and have 80% of it paid for.

For people who cannot afford it at all, that's where community-based organisations come into their own. Wexford Local Development Company has for instance made winters warmer for 2,500 low-income households in the past five years and has the capacity to do much more.

Gearoid Fitzgibbon also points out in this edition that community

volunteers can take matters into their own hands by conducting energy audits in their communities, potentially leading to a local jobs boost.

The Government recognises the usefulness of taking a community-based approach to retrofitting. Wexford Local Development had one of the ten stands showcasing some of the best Irish responses at an international conference to tackle long-term unemployment held in Dublin in October. We've a report on pages 14-17.

In 2012, we'd like to see the community-based approach developed further and supported by more resources, rather than farming out the work to overseas companies.

The community-based companies, certainly in most counties, have the capacity to match the demand.

-ooOoo-

To all our readers, here's wishing you a Happy Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Cover photo: Our thanks to Charlene Franklin and Pat Mulqueen from Moyross for volunteering to be our front cover models. Photo by 'Changing Ireland'.

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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 Changing Ireland Community Media Ltd., or the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.

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CHANGING IRELAND



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and rainwater.*

Unpaid mentors support unemployed women in Mayo



Mentors completed a two-day training session before the 'Revival' course began.

By **Conor Hogan**

By March of this year, there were 4,680 women on the live register in Mayo, up from 3,315 two years earlier.

In fact, Mayo has the highest rural unemployment rate in the country with CSO figures showing the rate among women in the county has risen by over 40% in the last two years.

"Many small businesses are making attempts at rationalising

cuts," Breda Murray of South West Mayo Development Company's (SWMDC) told us, "and secretaries seem to be the first people they will lay off."

This led SWMDC to join up with Tacu Family Resource Centre (FRC) in Ballinrobe and Claremorris FRC to provide a support programme called 'Revival'. The programme, or course, has been run twice and could become a blueprint for a national strategy if the course leaders make a successful case.

The aim is to improve people's

educational qualifications, as well as helping them to develop social skills – making a return to the labour market that bit easier.

It isn't just women on the live register that are eligible, however, but the underemployed and unregistered too. Each woman on the course works one-on-one with a mentor who themselves is unpaid and values gaining experience.

Most of the mentors were working part-time, some being students, as well as two who were retired people.

Even though the work was unpaid, the 26 mentors - all women - were enthusiastic as our interview with Helena Deane shows.

Cost-effectiveness was a critical aspect in running the course.

The course has been held once already, in Castlebar.

Of the 40 women who took part, 14 have since found employment (in pharmaceutical positions, supervisory positions, health care, retail and administration). Another 13 are now in full-time education and training, studying childcare, social science, computing, IT and reception skills.

Considering the overall budget for the programme is €50,000, there is clearly a high return on this investment in women.

"It's exceptional value for money," said Breda. "We provide a nice venue, lunch for the mentors costing €8 a day, contribute towards mileage, provide rural transport to the participants, pay to train the mentors, the radio advertisement was €20 and we had to pay for postage stamps."

"Other than that the cost is virtually nil and I'm meeting colleagues to see if I can mainstream this programme for other target groups, and I'm looking to get the green light from the Rural Development Programme."

Course participants earn two FETAC Level 3 certificates and in June Minister Frances Fitzgerald made the official presentations to the first women to complete the course.

"For the second run, we hoped to get 30 people on the course, but had to accommodate nine more."

The Claremorris/Ballinrobe 'Revival' course began on October 27.

FEMALES NATIONALLY

Only 54.5% of women are in the Irish workforce, compared to 73% of men.

Over the course of this year, the number of women on the live register in Ireland has risen by more than 3%, while for men the figure has fallen by 0.9%, and according to the UN's recently published Human Development Index, only 54.5% of women are in the Irish workforce, compared to 73% of men.

For more information, contact Maeve Early on 094-93-66692.

Only 54.5% of women are in the Irish workforce, compared to 73% of men.

3 FURTHER SUPPORTS

Of course, SWMDC like all local development companies also support unemployed men.

For instance, in Claremorris, the company is currently running a course called 'Where Now, What Next?' which supports seven men at a time.

The participants attend a two-hour session each week for eight weeks that help them build on their educational qualifications and social skills among other things.

The course is funded under the Local and Community Development Programme.

The company is also running a series of one-day 'Reboot Your Career' workshops.

And again through the LCDP it has funded the publication of an information directory and map for unemployed Castlebar people which was produced by the local Family Resource Centre. The directory is available in print and online through the company's website: southmayo.com

Conor Hogan, Journalist

Conor Hogan from Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, has joined 'Changing Ireland' as a journalist.

He previously worked for an online magazine as a staff writer and sub-editor contributing articles on sport, politics, film, history, comedy and more.

A first-class, honours graduate in Communications from NUI Maynooth, he also achieved a first class in his Humanities BA from St Patricks College, Carlow.

He appreciates the value of the work covered by this publication. For two years, Conor served as a volunteer on an after-schools programme. He also presented a music programme for some



time on a community radio station.

He has produced strong copy for this edition and we look forward to the coverage he will provide over the coming months.

Conor's work here is sponsored through the national Jobbridge Programme.

Helena helped three women recover confidence

Volunteers are mentoring unemployed people in Mayo,

REPORTS CONOR HOGAN:

Each person on the 'Revival' course for unemployed women in Mayo works one-on-one with a mentor, who themselves is unpaid.

"I became aware of the programme through an announcement in the Mayo Leader," Helena Dean, a consultant at Business Connection Ireland, told us. "I had some start-up business mentoring experience."

Helena mentored three women, the first woman wanted to get back into education, the second sought part-time work or to set up a business, while the third hoped to find full-time employment.

The main problem Ms Dean found was a lack of confidence.

"One of the women, even though she had a Masters degree, didn't trust herself for the right jobs and was applying for things like shelf-stacking and tended to get rejected for being overqualified.

"I provided practical help with writing job applications, how best to

highlight skills in your CV.

"With the woman who wanted to start up her own business, I drew up a business plan with her and, in the mean time, helped her find part-time work, which she is very happy with."

Meanwhile, she found an accountancy course in Ballina for the woman seeking further education. The third lady, who wanted full-time employment, wasn't as successful, as she had to return home to Poland for family reasons.

"We did get good feedback from her, though, as she said that she had gained greatly in self-confidence."

"It's a great feeling to be able to help people," Helena Dean added, "It was a pleasure to participate in the programme. Women who felt totally out of their depth now feel like contributing members of society."

The minimum requirement for a mentor is a third-level degree in social science, after which they receive FETAC training for the course – free education. They then work 3-9 hours



with the mentee, gaining valuable experience in their field and a reference. Therefore, the aim of the 'Revival' programme isn't just to support the 39 mentees to find employment, but

also the mentors and there have been many enquiries from people wishing to become mentors.



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VOX-POP

"I'm a searcher, I shop around for what is cheaper in Tesco, Dunnes and Aldi. I look for both good value and nutrition, but if I have to choose, I go for the value. I've skipped meals, because it is more important that my four-year-old son is fed than myself. He goes shopping with me and has an influence into what food I'd buy. We go to the chipper or Chinese on the weekend."

- Kate Fitzpatrick – Raheen, Limerick

VOX-POP

"The recession has changed how I eat. It used to be nutrition that was important, but now it's just getting food on the table. I'd go to the chipper twice a week. I've a grown-up son who goes to the chipper every night. He won't eat fruit or vegetables - lives on sandwiches and take-aways."

- Ann McNamara – Ballynanty, Limerick

Healthy eating courses spread across capital



The breakfast roll, now part of male Ireland's dietary landscape.



Liz Griffin

“

We give people recipes, show them how to prepare food, and get them to taste it. It takes people back-to-basics when it comes to cooking.

”

A course in Clondalkin that is also delivered in six other communities across Dublin is teaching people to cook for themselves at a time when the diets of disadvantaged groups are disimproving.

"It's peer-led, meaning local people are trained to run the course," said Liz Griffin, project co-ordinator of 'Healthy Food Made Easy', "It takes people back-to-basics."

People's diets are narrowing thanks to the recession, according to a national report by 'Safefood' published on November 2nd and the most at-risk groups are young single men and low-income families with children, especially one-parent families.

However, the boom in community gardens and healthy eating courses such as the one in Clondalkin (which is supported through the LCDP) show that communities have answers.

Currently, says the CSO, 14% of Irish people are at risk of poverty, while the

figure among the unemployed is 33%, among lone parents is 35% and among children is 18%. With less money in their pockets, people are prioritising value over nutrition, and as a result, their health is suffering.

The best way to tackle this problem is through education – to show people that they can make unexpensive meals that are also nutritious, as the course in Clondalkin succeeds in doing.

Asked why unhealthy diets are on the rise, Ms Griffin said that from observing people coming on the course, "they have less disposable income and they're going to the take-aways which is expensive."

The six-week health programme has been running since 2004 through the Clondalkin Community Healthy Living Centre in association with the Health Promotion Service.

The programme attempts to alter people's behavior:

"We consistently promote the food pyramid. We give people recipes, show them how to prepare food, and get them

to taste it. It takes people back-to-basics when it comes to cooking. In the fifth session, a dietician from the health promotion service takes people through what they should be eating. It is a fun practical course that's available to all community groups in Dublin."

The course has been extended over the years to Palmerstown, Newcastle, Lucan and parts of Tallaght.

The work fits in with LCDP Goal 1 which aims "to promote awareness, knowledge and uptake of a wide range of statutory, voluntary and community services."

Further information: Call Liz in Clondalkin on 01-4570665 or email her at: lgriffin@cpln.ie

W: giyireland.com, safefood.eu, and cpln.ie

Note: Safefood is a North-South organisation that works in four key areas: education, research, nutrition and communicating with consumers.

The business of leaving prison

By Allen Meagher

James served four months in Cork prison and was the guest speaker people paid most attention to when he addressed a Business In The Community event in Ringaskiddy in October.

On release James had nowhere to go and would have had nobody to support him only for BITC's prisoner mentoring programme. Only for the Mentoring Service, he would almost certainly be homeless and may have re-offended.

He didn't explain what landed him behind bars, didn't give his surname and photography was disallowed. Among those listening were senior staff from Janssen, Ulster Bank, IBM, Musgraves and PepsiCo, all member companies of BITC.

"I was embarrassed and ashamed for my family when I was before the judge, especially for my children. I was not without my problems before coming before the court and I was out of work.

"Prison was a shock. The cells are designed for one person, but you'd often have three prisoners to a cell. There are no toilets in the cells and you're locked up for 17 out of every 24 hours.

"Prison dictated when I ate and slept and walked.

Luckily, a teacher in the prison put James in touch with a mentor called Breda Wallace.



"She put me on the right track and gave me direction. She was very understanding and non-judgemental and she knew what I did and didn't think less of me for it.

"When I got out I'd no money, no flat and no-one to talk to. I spent the first nights in a homeless shelter.

Then he met his mentor and things began to improve as their weekly coffee meetings progressed.

"She gave support in any way she could, for example, she helped me make phone calls and put me in touch with FLAC and Citizens

Information. She helped me plan and organise.

"If I didn't meet Breda before I left Cork prison I'm not sure what I might have done."

James urged everyone to appreciate their freedom, not to take it for granted and, knowing that he was speaking to some big employers, he pointed out that he was available for work if anyone present had a position open.

He said he was "honoured, privileged and humbled to tell his story". However, his story showed better than any number of statistics the impact of one of BITC's key programmes.

Shatter's leg up for ex-cons seeking work

The ideology underpinning our prison system is supposed to be that of rehabilitation, but what chance are people like James given to become functional members of society when only 52% of employers in a recent IBEC survey stated that they would even consider hiring someone with a criminal record.

As such, many ex-cons are condemned to a life of poverty, vastly increasing the chances that they will re-offend.

A new proposal from Justice Minister Alan Shatter, however, hopes to give them a fighting chance by allowing them to omit the time they spent in prison from their CV. The Spent Convictions Bill will, as Alan Shatter said in a statement "not entail a deletion of the record, but rather a non-disclosure of the offence in certain circumstances." The Irish Penal Reform Trust (IPRT) praised the new legislation, which will be published in early 2012, describing it as a "necessary element in ensuring that the commission of a criminal offence does not lead to permanent barriers to reintegration into society."

Conor Hogan

Business in the

Community

Ireland

FACTBOX

The Mentoring Service's aim is to assist prisoners with the transition from prison to the community with the ultimate goal of moving away from crime. It is a new programme managed by Business in the Community Ireland, in partnership with the Irish Prison Service, and funded by the Dormant Accounts Fund. It provides one-to-one practical and emotional support to prisoners before and after release. For now, it operates in Cork and Castlereagh but will be expanded.

For more information contact: Patti McCann, Programme Coordinator

T: 086-609-5460 or (01) 874-3848. E: pmccann@bitc.ie

W: bitc.ie/thementoringservice

Local development abroad

A new website called 'LDnet' focuses on "local development" work across Europe and further afield.

The site is being added to all the time and includes an up-to-date article on local development in Ireland (for more, see page 25).

It looks at a new pilot project recently launched in six US cities by the Obama administration called 'Strong Cities, Strong



Communities.

It also examines the pros and cons of British prime Minister David Cameron's 'Big Society' approach to supporting communities, and much more.

W: ldnet.eu

Six tips for President Higgins!

On November 11th, Michael D Higgins was sworn in as President of Ireland. He has a record in fighting for human rights and social inclusion. So what tips would you give him? 'Changing Ireland's CONOR HOGAN caught up with various people in the Community and Voluntary Sector and asked them for their views on our new poet President.



Manus Bree, Community Worker Ballymunwhitehall Area Partnership

What kind of a President do you think Michael D will make?

An inspiring one, I think. He's very much concerned with the marginalised in society. The keystone of his Presidency will be giving them a voice.

What piece of advice would you give him, now that he's President?

Reach out to parts of communities that aren't being listened to or included, for instance the poor and the mentally and physically disabled. I'm sure he'll do that.

He's in his 70s now and we too often dismiss the contributions elderly people can make. He can provide a model for older people.

Also, I'd tell him to enjoy it.

Is there anything that strikes you about Michael D?

He's a very genuine man and a great listener. He's passionate and wears his strong beliefs on his sleeve. His academic background also gives him an ability to see the macro, and put policies into context. It'll be great for the volunteering sector having a man like that as our President.

Trevor Quinn, SIPTU, Cork

What kind of President do you think Micheal D will make?

I think he'll make an excellent president. He's a fair man, a straight talker and he understands the needs of people. He's not one of those politicians in an ivory tower.

What advice would you give him?

To follow through with his policies of social inclusion. Work to protect communities, whose heart is being ripped out at the moment.

What is your favourite Michael D speech?

My favourite Michael D speech is one of his last ones, where he spoke out against the government lowering the minimum wage. It was a fantastic oration and it came from the heart. It showed what kind of man he is, that it pains him when Irish people are hurting.



Rachel Mullen – Co-ordinator, Equality Rights Alliance

What kind of President do you think Michael D will make?

It's a time of unprecedented crisis and he's the President that Ireland needs right now. I believe he'll inspire hope and empower a



Michael D Higgins, now President, in Boyle this summer. Photo courtesy realboyle.com

country where people are uncertain and fearful about the future. I'm certain that the values he has always lived by- inclusivity, equality and respect for others, will be emphasised throughout his seven years.

What's your favourite Michael D poem?

His poem 'When Will My time Come' is beautiful. There is a great line in it: 'When my time comes, I will have made my journey.'

If you were to give one piece of advice to Michael D, now that he's president, what would it be?

To enjoy the journey. He deserves it.



Pat Walshe – Radio Manager, Connemara FM

What kind of President do you think Michael D will make?

He'll make a wonderful President. He has it all, the personality, and the cultural aspect, while his experience international will stand us in great stead. His values are ones that we can all share.

When will my time come?

By Michael D. Higgins
(an excerpt)

... if there is a healing,
It is in the depth of a silence, whose plumbed depths require a journey
through realms of pain that must be faced alone.
The hero, setting out, will meet an ally at a crucial moment.
But the journey home is mostly alone.
When my time comes I will have made my journey.
And through all my senses will explode the evidence of light and air and
water, fire and earth.
I live for that moment.

What is your favourite Michael D poem?

I don't think poetry is one of his strong points. He's a great speaker, though, and really enthusiastic in his speeches.

What struck you from your own experiences of meeting Michael D?

He's our local TD and we've interviewed him several times. He's always available – never refuses to do an interview. We're hoping to get an interview with him soon. He's shyer than you'd think and can get very nervous before going on the air. Brilliant with a crowd though – he's an audience man.

What piece of advice would you give President Higgins?

To be himself. Simple as that.

Anne Fitzpatrick, Community Worker Dodder Valley Partnership

What kind of President do you think Michael D will make?

I don't know if he'll be able to revolutionize the office of like Mary McAleese and Mary Robinson, though he did quite well as a Labour Party minister.

He'll be make a good ambassador for Ireland, I'd say, because of his general knowledge in terms of international and European affairs.

If you were to give him one piece of advice, what would it be?

Stay in touch with the people on the ground.

What is your favourite speech of his?

The last one he made, defending the minimum wage, was one of the best speeches to ever come out of the Dail.



Ger Doyle, Community Worker and Social Enterprise Advisor

What kind of President do you think Michael D will make?

I think he'll shift the thinking in Ireland from individualism to equality. This is key, because research shows that equality benefits all sectors of society.

What one piece of advice would you give the President?

He should highlight the need for a new economic model based on sustainability rather than profit for the private sector. He can set the tone for that by visiting certain community projects, and promoting the work of people like Peadar King, Maeve Murphy and other academics rather than economists like Colm McCarthy and David McWilliams.

Any Michael D moments that stand out for you?

He was very impressive and well briefed when he had that debate with the American Michael Graham on George Hook's show. He wasn't afraid to express himself as a man of the left, and showed up the Tea Party for the crass organisation that it is.

High five looking at alignment of local govt & local development sector

Five people were appointed by Minister Phil Hogan to a high level steering group in September to look at how a closer alignment between local government and the local development sector would work.

The five were chosen on the basis of their experience and considerable knowledge of both the Local Government and Local Development sectors, said the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. They are:

Jim Miley - former chairperson of Concern Worldwide, founder of myhome.ie and former secretary general of Fine Gael (in the late '90s). He was once a broadcaster and also served in the past as chief executive of Dublin City Chamber of Commerce. Mr Miley will chair the steering group.

Geraldine Tallon - secretary general of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government

Gerry Kearney - former secretary general of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

Dr. Patricia O'Hara - regional policy expert with professorial duties at the National Institute for Regional Spatial Analysis in Maynooth

Liam Keane - former regional co-ordinator of HSE South.

Martina Moloney - Galway County Manager

It is anticipated the Steering Group will submit recommendations to the Minister by the end of January.



John Miley

SUBMISSIONS INVITED

Interested parties have been invited to make submissions to the steering group and a number of presentations by key stakeholders have taken place.

Questionnaires have also been issued to stakeholders including:

local development companies and their representative organisation (namely the ILDN),

County and city managers and their representative organisation (CCMA), the three representative organisations for the elected members;

the network body for the Community and Voluntary Fora;

Volunteer Ireland – the representative body for the 22 State-funded volunteer centres;

the Wheel, Community Workers Co-operative, Social Justice Ireland as representative bodies for community and voluntary organisations; and

Service users; by way of focus groups and questionnaires.

As part of the consultation process, the steering group is also accepting submissions from other parties as they come forward.

ISSUE DEBATED: See pages 30-31 for a summary of a Dail debate concerning this matter.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Men In Childcare network



In 2004, the 'Men In Childcare Network' was established to support men working in crèches and Montessori, while raising awareness about the importance of increasing the number of men involved. They have also helped create a pan-European network of other male childcare workers across the EU. Their aim is to increase the male participation rate to 5% by the year 2020.

"We have to normalize the idea that men can be involved in Childcare," Doherty said, "and what is very important is that we get the media interested in the topic".

On November 19th, the network held a conference in Dublin entitled 'Reimagining Childhood Care and Education.'

The cartoons featured here are from a series posted on the network's facebook page. When you're in a minority of 1% or less, it's no harm to employ a sense of humour.

The Men In Childcare network receives support from Pobal.

T: 087-2299208.

E: menicirl@gmail.com

F: [facebook.com/meninchildcare](https://www.facebook.com/meninchildcare)



Damian Walshe with pupils, from left, Bobby Hogan and Jack Kealy, at Clonmel Community Resource Centre. Photograph courtesy: Matt Kavanagh

The other 1% - 99% of childcare workers are female

By Conor Hogan

It is strange that while completely normal for a man to take care of his own children, those who wish to make a career out of childcare are often greeted with suspicion.

"The question is sometimes asked - 'Why would a man want to be in a room with children?' - but the same would never be posed about a woman," says Andrew Doherty of the Waterford County Childcare Community.

While this is one of the reasons for the low participation rate by men in childcare, it doesn't quite explain the especially low rate in Ireland, estimated at less than 1% of staff - the worst in the EU. Compare this to the higher than 20% participation rate in Norway and Denmark.

So, is there any immediate difference between Ireland and these countries that could explain this disparity? For starters, there

MEN IN CHILDCARE IN NORWAY

"In Norway," said Mr Doherty, "children spend 60% of their time outdoors doing activities such as fishing and gathering timber. These are the kind of things that would attract a man into that kind of a position. In Ireland, we spend a lot more time indoors. Another cause would be

the poor paying conditions. There is a certain expectation on men here to be the breadwinners - that it's okay for the woman to do it, if she is not the main wage-earner in the house."

Damian Walshe is one of that rare breed of pre-school carers, though it wasn't a job he originally planned on doing for a living.

PARENTS "A BIT SHOCKED"

"After I finished my Leaving Cert in '07," he told us, "I didn't have the honours Irish, so I decided to do the B.A. in Early Childhood Studies in Waterford I.T. as an alternative way of getting into primary school teaching. I went out on placement in the Clonmel Community Resource Centre and discovered that early years really suited me."

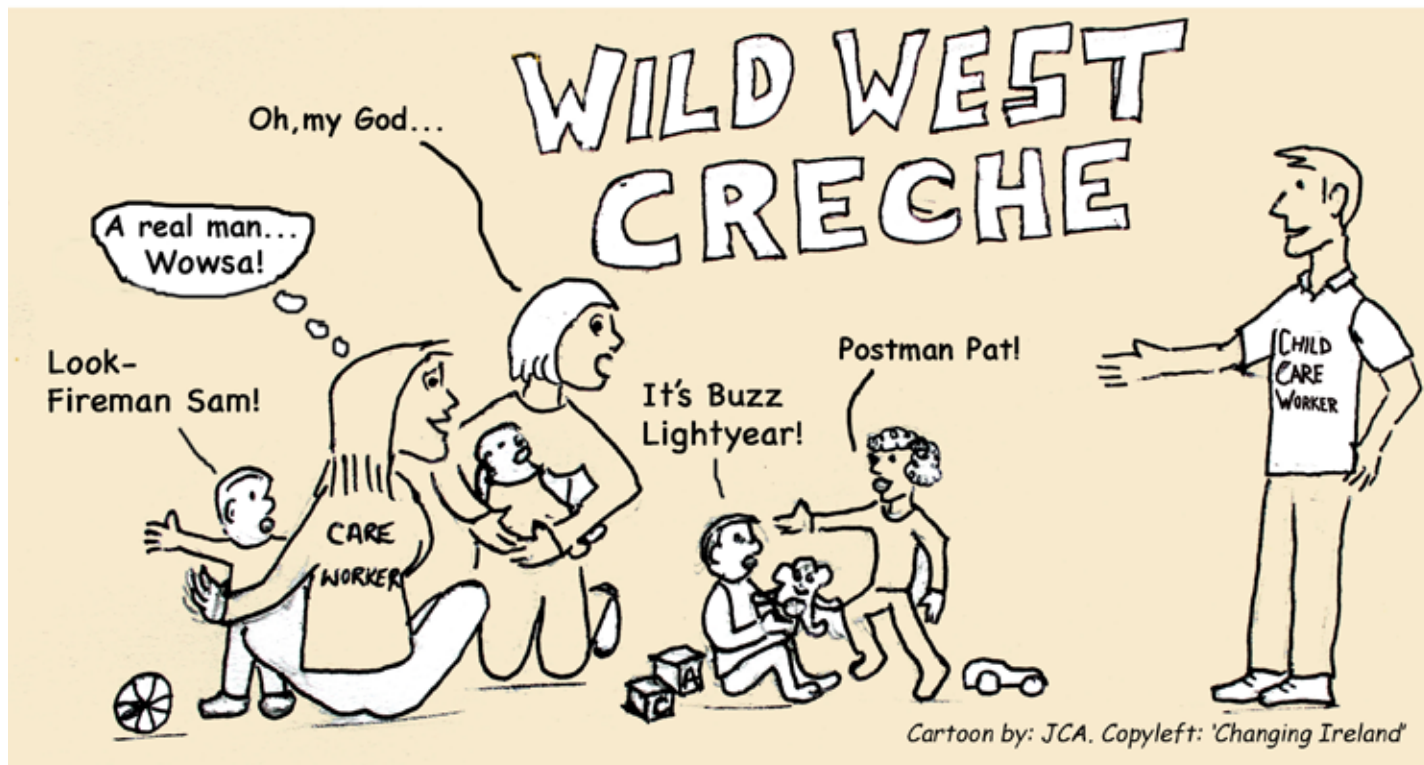
His experiences since he started have been positive; however the rarity of men working in the sector took some people a little aback:

"My manager had never even come across another man who applied for the position before. The parents, as well, were initially a bit shocked. Once they got over that, though, they were very welcoming and supportive."

Mr Walshe is now in the second year of an MA in Social Studies in WIT and his thesis is focussed on "the influence male role models can have on the children of lone parent families." Ireland currently has the highest of single-parent families in the EU at 23%.

Coupled with the absence of men in childcare, many children are growing up without a positive male role model.

On Tom's first day in the creche, he struggled with his superhero status...



OPINION

Making the Programme work on the ground

BY GEAROID FITZGIBBON

The Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) is the main state-funded community development programme in Ireland, with a budget of €63.4million, a staff of around 3,000 and a wide range of social actions carried out by 51 Local Development Companies.

A QUESTION OF IMAGE

These companies suffer an image/branding deficit. They all have individual names, and if locally recognised, are not readily identified by the general public as part of a single Government-funded programme.

My own organisation is the misfortunately titled 'North Tipperary LEADER Partnership'. Neither "LEADER" nor "partnership" are very intelligible to the general public. Similar organisations in Scotland are called "Community Planning Partnerships."

NO VISIBLE OUTCOMES

After the McCarthy Report in 2009 slated the programmes that existed before the LCDP as having "no visible outcomes", POBAL launched a computerised system (called IRIS) to better record the benefits of the new programme.

This needs to be used to share learning between projects in different parts of the country, instead of community development organisations operating like separate fiefdoms.

In addition, IRIS needs to avoid narrow interpretations of "outcomes" and over-centralised micro-management that it could breed.

CORPORATE OR COMMUNITY?

The local development companies, made up of smaller groups amalgamated in 2007 and 2010, have the benefits of economies of scale, but also the weaknesses of large organisations. It is down to individual staff and managers to counter managerialism and

to retain the ethos of empowerment of and service to communities.

Board members can bring a huge amount to the table but need to connect to the work of staff. And what of the proposed merger with County Councils? Is that the end of Partnership?

Whatever shape develops, community workers must continue to serve communities, develop bottom-up community projects and support volunteers.

Community development must not be turned into a box-ticking exercise to satisfy the imbibers at the "Doheny and Nesbit" School of Economics.

* Gearoid Fitzgibbon is chairperson of Changing Ireland Community Media Ltd.



‘Occupy’ protesters approve

INTRODUCTION

The ‘Building Quality Jobs in the Recovery’ international conference looked at: youth unemployment; early childhood supports; long-term exclusion; and the social economy. Each of the four has an impact on the labour market and the health of the local economy and they’re all interlinked.

ALLEN MEAGHER REPORTS FROM DUBLIN

In an ideal world young people should be the target of investment “more than our revered banking institutions” Minister Joan Burton told an OECD/Pobal conference held in Dublin on October 13-14th.

“Youth unemployment does lasting damage to the individual and to society” she noted.

The Minister for Social Protection announced plans at the conference to launch a new scheme to subsidise the cost to employers of taking on new staff in an attempt to reduce the rate of long-term unemployment.

Currently, 46% of young people (15-24 year olds) on the live register are unemployed for more than a year (which defines them as long-term unemployed) and 31% of all young people are unemployed.

“Even short spells do damage, particularly to young men,” she said.

Reminding people that she was part of a “Government of national recovery”, Minister Burton was the third minister in two days to address the international jobs conference held in Dublin in October.

The conference was organised by Pobal, the OECD in co-operation with the Departments of the Environment, Community



Clodagh McDonnell from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government with Gabriel O'Connell of Monaghan Integrated Development at the conference.

and Local Government; Social Protection; Children and Youth Affairs and Pobal.

International experts debated the pros and cons of different approaches to tackling long-term unemployment in front of an audience that included national policy-makers and people working at regional and county level to effect change.

Anne Sonnet of the OECD said the short-term outlook for young people was “gloomy” while the conference looked at ways of improving the life-chances of the most marginalised.

“Job search assistance programmes are often the best way to help young people,” she said.

Coincidentally a week earlier, the Occupy Dame Street camp sprung up a few hundred yards from the conference venue in Dublin Castle.

The people camped out there were unaware of the nearby gathering. One graduate called John almost choked when he learned the OECD were in town and he recounted tales of what he saw as the OECD’s brutal disregard for workers’ rights. John viewed them as “right-wing bullies.”

Other Occupy Dame Street campers gave the conference their blessing upon hearing that the unemployed were represented and that trade unionists and community leaders were among those taking part.

“I hope they fix it. I’ve really been feeling the pinch in my pockets. I’ve lost three stone in the past two years, I can hardly afford to feed myself,” said one young man who said it was nearly impossible for him to find work because he’d left school early.

During the boom years, Seamus (he didn’t give his surname) worked in retail.

Alongside him, two more jobless graduates expressed frustration.

A music graduate listed off the Occupy Dame Street demands – one for instance being to impose higher taxes on profits from the gas finds off Ireland’s western seaboard. (Unlike the Occupy movement in the USA who first highlighted that wealth was concentrated among 1% of the population, the Dame Street campers had agreed a list of basic demands).

Meanwhile, back in Dublin Castle, James Doorley of the National Youth Council of Ireland gave his organisation’s backing to Government schemes such as Tus and Jobbridge remarking: “Unemployment is our greatest social and

“
Coincidentally a week earlier, the Occupy Dame Street camp sprung up a few hundred yards from the conference venue in Dublin Castle.
“

ed of OECD conference aims



John who we met at 'Occupy Dame Street'.

economic ill and the emigration party has unfortunately replaced the 21st party for a lot of young people."

He asked was huge unemployment and a loss of sovereignty due to "the collapse in the state's ability to handle the financial sector."

In his address, Minister Phil Hogan talked of the importance of initiatives generated in communities that influence job creation directly and indirectly.

Speaking about the Local and Community Development Programme's main aims, he said "80% of programme budgets (are targeted) towards the provision and coordination of education and employment supports to these communities, with the remainder focusing on access and uptake of services and promoting the engagement of disadvantaged communities with policy and practice."

Meanwhile, Sylvain Giguère (head of the OECD's Local Economic and Employment Development section) said the

evidence was growing that investing in "quality early years services" for children greater improved a person's later employability and life-chances. He added:

"The provision of early years education and childcare supports is of major importance in Ireland... in reducing socio-economic inequalities experienced within disadvantaged communities."

Robert Anderson meanwhile drew attention to the situation in Britain where the numbers of young people receiving a disability allowance had shot up from 110,000 to 200,000 people.

Saying it was as if they were "written off", he called for young people's mental health services to be boosted and for them to be supported to find work.

In Britain he said it was as if they had been "written off."

And that was the one thing the conference set out to do – to counteract the feeling many young people here do have that they are written off.

The people 'Changing Ireland' spoke to outside the Central Bank were sober in their views about the conference and hopeful that it may lead policy-makers in the right directions.

MORE INFO: The full range of presentations, in print and video, on topics we've only touched on here are available through Pobal's website at: <http://bit.ly/rX3LNg>



Antwerp's Youth Competence Centres

Youth work in Antwerp, Belgium, is helping young people see they have more going for them than they realise by giving recognition to what youth workers call "informally acquired competences."

REPORTS ALLEN MEAGHER.

In one centre, the first step towards a more competence-based model of local youth work came about by accident.

What happened has helped change the way youth work is approached in Antwerp.

After the centre temporarily lost one of its youth workers it had to assign work to the youths themselves.

"The computer room was a good example: our youth worker used to be present all the time when it was opened. Now this responsibility has been given to a youth work volunteer," reported one centre.

Of all the cities in Belgium, Antwerp has the biggest number of inhabitants born outside the EU and a high unemployment rate. At 14.6% it's double the regional average.

And if you're from outside the EU and live in Antwerp, you're twice as likely as an EU national to be out of work. Early school leavers are many and the official agencies don't reach these people, according to a report circulated at

the OECD conference (and available online through www.pobal.ie).

So the city authorities now fund Youth Competence Centres (YCCs) to formally recognise the progression of young people on a potential path to employment.

The project took on three youth workers in 2009 and each is expected to reach 40 young people a year "with

whom they take a journey that will increase their work related competences and help them in their search for work or training."

Outreach work takes time and the workers must meet the young people where they're at to gain their trust, which is usually outside office hours.

The workers must combine street credibility with a full understanding of the labour market, the education system, and the relevant institutions operating in these fields.

The project focuses on personal development and increased social orientation and participation, eventually directing the young people towards work and a career. It is based on recognising informally acquired competences, or as it is also known in the business – "accreditation of prior experiential learning."

The priority target group is the 16 to 25 age group who find themselves in a vulnerable situation. Youths are now being trained up to provide leadership themselves and to decide on actions.

Check out the evaluation report here: <http://slidesha.re/9Yg6hH>
W: www.jes.be (Dutch)

VERY TIMELY

"It was a very timely conference and the flow of information across 20 countries will (contribute) towards our policies in the future.

"We don't want long-term unemployment for



long periods where people lose their work ethic. They need educational support, community development, volunteer support and training to upskill for the next phase of their working lives."

Phil Hogan, Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government

VIEWS & OPINIONS

This conference was good because there's a lot of people here who aren't aware of the links between early childhood education and job creation.



Speakers Orla Doyle and Helen Penn

"Early childhood care can have a long-term impact on the economy... by investing in early childhood especially for disadvantaged children, it saves money because they're more likely to stay in school, to get jobs - and quality jobs - and be more productive."

- Orla Doyle, UCD, one of the few economists who works in the area of early childhood care and education.

The diversity of activities which can take place within an organisation highlights the importance of not adapting a 'one-size-fits-all approach' when considering the way in which social economy organisations are supported."

- Issues Paper published in advance of the conference which was drafted by Lucy Pyne of OECD LEED with support from Pobal among others.



Sylvain Giguere

To improve the way our policies can lead to better jobs and stronger economies we need to work with the practitioners. And Pobal is the contact point in Ireland for practitioner knowledge that is so useful. We mix (their knowledge) with the

pool of knowledge from all our other countries."

- Sylvain Giguere, head of the Local Economic and Employment Development Division in the OECD.

Well certainly one exception is the childcare sector. A lot of childcare staff come through Community Employment Schemes and a lot of them would never have reached those positions without CE."

- Dermot Leamy, representing Westmeath County Childcare Committee, clashed with Philip O'Connell of the ESRI who had claimed Community Employment were good for communities but there was "no evidence" that they increased participants' job prospects.

Subsidised training is one response

Minister Joan Burton told the OECD/Pobal conference that while "activation" was the key labour market policy for this Government it was "not a cure to all our ills when it comes to unemployment."

She said other measures were helpful in tackling youth unemployment including expansion of education and training places; giving subsidies to companies to employ young unemployed people with protection built into the scheme to protect older workers' jobs; and the creation of job guarantee schemes where for example public sector or local government bodies would be allowed to employ people for a year or two and pay them the equivalent of



Minister Joan Burton at the conference

the benefits they would have received on unemployment benefits plus a small premium.

"In effect this would be a form of subsidised training," she said.



Ireland's partnership approach

Jerry Murphy of Pobal, in his presentation on community and partnership-based interventions in Ireland, said that the approach is based on evidence that shows that:

(1) Some services are more effectively delivered if they are locally designed and managed.

(2) For some services, the flexibility, adaptability and skillset of the non-statutory sector allows for more effective service.

He acknowledged that "balancing

local creativity with the need for national accountability" was a challenge, adding that such "tensions can be resolved through high quality systems and supports to local delivery groups."

Other challenges he identified (and named solutions for) were:

- Demonstrating long-term impacts, showing value for money and adhering to national priorities.

- Allowing enough flexibility and space for adapting programmes to local needs

ESRI: People 'not better off' on welfare



Research released in October - in the same week the OECD/Pobal conference was held - showed that the vast majority of unemployed people earn less on social welfare than if they had work.

A myth has developed about citizens in receipt of social welfare whereby it is often presumed a large proportion of them don't want to work and that they are financially better off receiving "benefits".

The study by the Economic and Social Research Institute found that 8 out of 10 unemployed people would increase their income by at least 50% if they got a job.

Only 3% of unemployed people would see their income drop if they took up a job.

The analysis was based on a national representative sample of real people

The 'Warm Project' in Wexford



Having undertaken research into the needs of older people, the Wexford Area Partnership (one of three companies that merged in 2009 to form Wexford Local Development - WLD) saw the need for older peoples' homes to be better insulated.

The Partnership was also working with long-term unemployed people who needed opportunities for skills development and for work experience in order to get a foothold in the labour market.

The development of the 'Warm Project' meant that WLD was able to fulfill the needs of low income households by providing them with access

to a service free-of-charge and also by providing employment and training opportunities to the long-term unemployed in an area where there is potential for job creation.

NOTE: A budget cut that could, however, impede progress is the reduction in the funding for training under the Community Employment scheme.

Separately, the SEAI said a cut in the amount of funding allowed per household for retrofitting (by private contractors) should not prevent the scheme's growth.

Read full story on pages 2-3.



Sligo Leader Partnership also operates a retrofitting and insulation project.

15,000 employed and 70,000 trained

- Survey of local development companies indicates

Over an 18-month period, Local Development Companies (LDCs) directly supported an estimated 15,000 people to find their way back into paid work, placed around 70,000 people on training courses and provided support to about 10,000 small business start-ups.

Many if not most of these people were long-term unemployed.

The Irish Local Development Network (ILDN) has just published the results of a survey for 2010 and the first six months of this year. The survey covered just over half (27 out of 51) the LDCs in the country and our headline figures are based on a doubling of the numbers. The actual national impact may be slightly lower or indeed higher.

Of the 27 companies that took part in the survey, they supported 7,341 to secure jobs and found training places for 35,006 people and 5,175 businesses were set up with their assistance.

For the first time, the full range of impacts delivered by LDCs - taking into account the myriad of national programmes they deliver - has been measured.

"It gives a company-wide picture of the impact and effectiveness of what local development companies are doing on the ground to support their communities," said the ILDN's Brian Carty.

LDCs manage the local delivery of up to 18 funded national programmes in their areas nationwide and the



Brian Carty

survey covers work conducted under the LCDP, Rural Development Programme, Tus, Rural Social Scheme, etc.

The Local and Community Development Programme for instance invests 80% of its resources - through the LDCs - into helping long-term unemployed people, by supporting them to return to work and training, set up businesses or indeed find work for the first time.

Meanwhile, under the Tus work placement programme, the 27 companies will deliver places for 2,118 unemployed people this year. One-by-one, these people are being introduced to and successfully placed with voluntary and community groups in their local areas.

The target is to have 5,000 people placed nationwide through Tus by year's end.

Note: In relation to business start-ups, the survey also found the 27 LDCs supported a further 3,532 businesses at local level through the Back to Work Education Allowance Scheme and the Short-Term Enterprise Allowance Scheme.



literacy / one-in-five campaign



Ballymun Whitehall Area
Partnership opportunity : renewal : progress



Take one; leave one!

- Republic's biggest book exchange is in Ballymun, probably!

On the first Thursday of every month, over 250 people file through the Ballymun Civic Centre as the monthly Book Exchange takes place, organised by Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership (BWAP).

It might even be the biggest book exchange in the country – Rosemary Kinchan of BWAP can't say for sure.

"It may be - there's no central record of this," said Ms Kinchan.

Yet it cost nothing to set up.

Soon after it started, schoolteachers noticed an improvement in pupils' reading ability, said Ms Kinchan.

The Book Exchange began life as one of the Partnership's activities for AONTAS Adult Learners Festival in February 2009 and grew from there. The community was very supportive – none of the books were bought; all were donated, including plenty for teenagers and children.

On exchange days, hundreds of books weigh down the tables in the atrium of the Civic Centre.

Local resident Bernie Gallagher said, "I love the idea that the books are free because they've become so expensive".

There's a regular extra dimension to Book Exchange when young children (0-4years) and their childminders can sit down for a story-reading session.

It works simply.

People who are confident reading stories show the others how best to read to children and the childminders then take turns reading stories to their children, or take a book home to do so. This is organised by the Partnership in conjunction with the Dublin North Central Childminding Advisory Service.

For avid readers, there is a mini daily book exchange in the Ballymun Shopping Centre outside the doors of the BWAP office.

Careen Doyle, a local resident said, "I'm delighted because I read so many books and this way I've a choice of books all the time."

The idea might seem obvious - bring a book and exchange it for free, but education worker, Colma Nic Lughadha, explained the wider vision: "The main aim is to get Ballymun reading, to help and encourage more people to read."

For more information, phone BWAP'S Education Section on 01-8423612. W: ballymun.org

BWAP receives funding through the Local and Community Development Programme.



A nationwide campaign used balloon launches to generate publicity.

One in five still experiencing abuse

This year's 16 Days of Action Opposing Violence Against Women 2011 campaign saw many events held to highlight the fact that one in five Irish women who have been in a relationship have been abused by a current or former partner.

International research demonstrates that a woman is more likely to be assaulted, injured, raped, or killed by a current or former partner than by any other person.

The launch of the 16 days took place on November 25th which is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

On December 9th, Limerick Women's Network held a one day conference with Banulacht on Women's Human Rights in Thomond Park, Limerick. LCDP workers Liz Price and Elaine Dalton (pictured) were among the organisers.

Hundreds of groups around the country – many supported through the LCDP – took part in balloon launches and other initiatives during the 16 days.

The actions countrywide are catalogued online: womensaid.ie/16daysblog



Community workers Liz Price and Elaine Dalton.



Ballymun's landscape has changed greatly in recent years and Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership is to the forefront of much of the work in the area and beyond. Declan Dunne is the CEO.

WORKING IN THE LCDP

My trade unionist Dad set me on social justice path

INTERVIEW WITH DECLAN DUNNE, BALLYMUN

BY ALAN JACQUES

Decan Dunne is the CEO of Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership since 2003 and he worked for 3 years before that in economic development in Clondalkin/CPLN. Some years further back, he employed 157 people in the private sector.

The Partnership is contracted by the Government through Pobal to address social problems related to poverty and social exclusion.

Declan is a non-executive director of Ballymun Regeneration. He is a member of the Irish National Childcare Coordination Committee at the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and holds a number of other directorships.

Job Title: CEO

Name of project: Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership

What are you reading at the moment?

Lots of junk fiction! Also it may sound pretentious but the Harvard Business Review is accessible, concise and practical.

Person you most admire?

Sylda Langford who was, until recently, the Director of the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. She left a hugely positive legacy for children and families. Gordon Jeyes the HSE National Director for Children and Family Services is very inspiring. He is quoted as saying that one way to boost efficiency is to use services to put more emphasis on personal responsibility, with the onus on communities to solve problems at local level.

The top 4 issues in Ireland today besides the economy?

1. Learning again that life is short, whatever is going on, each day can be lived consciously and appreciated. Small acts of kindness have lifelong impacts.

2. Effective safeguarding of children.
3. A more equal society is a safer more rewarding place to live.
4. Health is wealth; it's our responsibility to actively invest in our health

Nationally, we need more?

Validation and encouragement.

Humility in victory

Rediscovery of the enjoyment that flows naturally from serving society. Contribution without expectation.

We need less?

Glee in fault finding.

How and why did you get involved?

My background is in the private sector. I started a business as a young person employing 157 people which I later sold to an American Multinational so I might not appear to be an obvious person to end up in this work. However, I went to school in Keogh Square (later called St Michaels Estate) in Dublin which was not that different to Ballymun and my secondary education was funded by a Dublin City Council scholarship. My Dad was a trade unionist and he sowed the seeds of social justice that now inform my work.

What difference has being involved made to you?

Lots of personal learning, more grey hair and no shortage of challenges. Great enjoyment and lots of hard work.

How have things changed for your community since you became involved?

Eighty per cent of the regeneration, demolition and rehousing is complete. Significant improvement is evident in primary education outcomes. IKEA employs about 70 local people. 72 local businesses have come together as one network Ballymun4business. All school principals work

together as one network supported by us. Local people are no longer stigmatised. Local people's community spirit is acknowledged near and far. Their Axis Arts and Community Centre has won national awards and travelled to perform from New York to Cape Town. It's truly awe-inspiring.

What motivates you as a volunteer?

My role as chair of the Holy Spirit Boys School, the largest boys primary school in Ballymun, is a voluntary role. It is a great privilege and honour to try to be of service to these children and families. The children, parents and teachers inspire me.

How do you get new volunteers?

Locally, the Partnership has a contract with the Dublin City North Volunteer Centre which provides an outreach service from our premises. We have a high level of volunteer participation on our board, working groups and networks with over 165 people involved.

For more information about Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership contact Declan or any staff member on: 01-8423612

W: ballymun.org



Declan Dunne giving a talk last year on health awareness. Photo courtesy of New Communities Partnership.

Volunteer Profile: Mary Lee Geary

As chairperson of the Community Development Association in Broadford in 2005, Mary Lee Geary turned activist and led the community in opposition to a proposed mobile phone mast in the village. It would have overlooked the site where the community had just secured planning permission for a crèche, social housing and after-school facilities. The community marched and campaigned to oppose the mast for health reasons and because it would take away from the area's scenic value.

Mary is currently chairperson of West Limerick Radio among other voluntary positions.

What are you reading at the moment?

A biography of Liam Cosgrave.

What's the last film you saw?
'The Guard' starring Brendan Gleeson.

Person you most admire?

Enda Kenny - because of his ability to bring people together.

How long are you volunteering in your local community?

Since the early '90s.

How and why did you get involved?

The local community council was looking for volunteers and I got involved through my allegiances with Fine Gael.

What are the important issues in Ireland today?

Most of the important issues in Ireland are economy related - job creation, emigration and the future of our young people after they leave college.

Nationally, we need more ...

Positivity. We should stop talking ourselves down and support the direction the government is taking. For instance, all that stuff we hear about burning the bondholders is nonsense. If we were to do that, how would we ever get back into the markets?

We need less ...

Economists, apart from George Lee.*

What difference has being a volunteer made to you?

You develop as a person and learn to work with other people and get to know your own community.

How have things changed since you became involved?

Lots of projects have come to fruition. For example, the old creamery has been converted into



an enterprise centre and we built social housing. It's thanks to the support we get from a core group of volunteers.

We are up 50 points in the Tidy Towns, and of course the setting up of the crèche has been a great help.

WLR, the local community radio, which I'm involved in, has also been great for the people of West Limerick. We have applied for a new ten-year licence, and that should be granted in December, as long as we keep our two studios.

And the daycare centre in

Broadford in association with the social housing projects caters for 20-25 people and is open from Monday to Friday.

Does anything annoy you in your voluntary work?

Getting projects up and running can be frustrating at times, but otherwise not really.

Is it as straightforward to attract volunteers as it used to be?

I don't think it's any harder. Most people are good to help out, to reach out to people. Recently we had a race day to fundraise for the local crèche and 54 people helped out. That is our annual event, and we raise between €12,000 and €14,000 through it.

I can't finish without acknowledging the help we get from the Limerick County Council and Enterprise Board, without whom we couldn't operate. And the people of Broadford are all incredibly supportive.

* Note: Mary is George Lee's cousin.

Note: If you wish to nominate a volunteer from your area, call the editor (details on page 2).

€5000 GRANTS CLOSING DATE

The Irish Men's Sheds Association has secured funding from The Ireland Funds and €5,000 is available to support the start-up of new Community Men's Sheds in Ireland, in rural areas of populations of 3,000 or less. The closing date for applications is Friday 16th of December.

NOTE: For more on Men's Sheds, see page 26.

37 men's sheds in Ireland

Many of the local development companies are supporting the growth of men's sheds in their areas and at least four LDCs have put the support of sheds into their workplans for next year.

Of the inquiries we get about setting up new sheds, I estimate (roughly) that about 40% are from FRC's, 30% LDCs and 30% from men or groups of men who have no agency connections.

Interestingly, we have a few very good examples where men's sheds have been set up without any funding or professional community development support.

There are now at least 37 active men's sheds on the island of Ireland; we are proud to be an all island organisation.

There are about another 25 men's sheds at planning stages.

- JOHN EVOY



A community planning meeting held by volunteers in Borrisokane, Co Tipperary, in October. The volunteers were supported by their local development company under LCDP goal 4.



When a town loses its main community project...

Having seen the unexpected closure of their local community development Group, two volunteers in Borrisokane are back to old-style community action in an effort to get lost services back into the town.

By Catriona Lennon and Miriam Lewis *,

In July of this year, Miriam and I decided to try to do something about our town of Borrisokane in Tipperary. Five years ago, the town lost its development project, Borrisokane Area Network Development, whose contract was withdrawn by Pobal following issues identified through an audit process.

The town lost five staff and was left with no support or services – we lost our childcare, jobs club, women's and men's groups and youth groups to name but a few.

After asking a lot of people in the town, particularly school mothers, everyone said they wanted services like the jobs club, after-school club and crèche back. They said a good service to start up first would be short courses for adults to take place during school hours.

As they say, if you want something done, do it yourself.

We brainstormed over a lot of coffee in the local cafe, The Country Kitchen. We made plans to do further research and get in contact with people who would know how to get these ideas off the ground. We started talking to previous members of the company who provided the services in the town and we were given a few names of people to talk to, and that is what we did.

After all our hard work researching and gaining contacts with different people, we approached North Tipperary LEADER Partnership.

A community development worker there, Gearóid Fitzgibbon, gave us a lot of support and advice, and has guided us along this journey. He suggested and facilitated meetings in our local hall to gauge the level of interest in what we were looking to provide. After a poor show on the first night, the meeting attendance has increased steadily.



Main Street, Borrisokane, Co. Tipperary (place into the photo)

In the local primary school we handed out expressions of interest forms, to gauge the level of demand for an after-school club and a drop-in centre to allow parents attend computer classes. The principal, Ms. King of Scoil Mhuire, has been very helpful and has supported us with the donation of a computer. Parents have donated books and toys to help get us established and we currently have 28 children looking to start the after-school club.

The pair of us have been Garda vetted and we've organised for volunteers willing to help out as supervisors to attend child protection courses.

The computer classes promised to mothers and fathers at the school gate have become a reality. The classes are being facilitated by Liz Flannery of the Life Long Learning Centre, Nenagh, in conjunction with Matthew Carr, principal of Borrisokane Community School.

One of the group is a cineophile,

and he has got help from nearby Cloughjordan Cine Club in showing the French film 'Amélie' in the Clarke Memorial Hall – a cinema that has not been used for over 40 years!

Actor Martin Sheehan is from here and you never know, we might get him involved yet!

Our original intention was to enhance work being doing by the 30 or so sports and community organisations in the town, and make greater use of existing local facilities. North Tipperary LEADER Partnership is currently funding us to do a small needs analysis for the town and workplan for the group, as well as some training for the volunteers to run the afterschools service.

What started as 'wouldn't it be great if...' is becoming a reality! And it's only the start!

* Catriona and Miriam are volunteers with Borrisokane Community Group.

"There are two ways of spreading light - to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it." ~Edith Wharton

It's time to measure the value of volunteering EU Year of the Volunteer

Report by CONOR HOGAN

It has been said that for every euro spent towards volunteering, the yield is between €5 and €8. Such arithmetic is crude, however, for in reality they are priceless for those who need their help. Perhaps then there is some karma in the fact that altruism is good for you, as a US report published in 2007 found that volunteers have greater longevity, higher functional ability, lower rates of depression and less incidence of heart disease.

As well as its health benefits, volunteering is also a definite way to express a person's active citizenship.

"With our sovereignty in this country currently compromised, volunteering is a way of making yourself involved in the decision making process," Dr Yvonne McKenna of Volunteer Ireland* told us.

Despite all these positives, only about a quarter of the European population gives of their free time to help others. It is thought that

the Irish participation rate is below the European average, although no national volunteering records are kept.

"In the 2006 census," said Ms McKenna, "one in six people ticked the box to say they were volunteers. Currently we don't know what the figure is, as there wasn't an option to say you were a volunteer in last year's census."

"Most countries in Europe keep a record of the number of volunteers, and this is something we really have to do. If the figures aren't counted, it doesn't count."

As well as the need for a record to be kept, it is important, not only that we make efforts to encourage the practice of volunteering, but to commemorate the selflessness of those who do.

The Ireland Involved Awards, for instance, which took place on December 5th, honoured the work of volunteers across the nation.

This year has also been declared 'European Year of the Volunteer' by



Have a look and have a go' was the message during Sligo Volunteer Week in September which celebrated the diverse range of volunteers and volunteer organisations throughout Sligo.

Volunteering encouraged while on the dole

A priority for Volunteer Ireland is to counter misinformation. In theory, our ever-increasing unemployment rate should lead to an increase in volunteerism, although Yvonne McKenna says that this is far from a guaranteed response to losing one's job.

One of the reasons, she believes, is that there is a perceived tension between volunteering and unemployment.

"The Department of Social Protection," McKenna noted, "have made it very clear that volunteering will not affect people with benefits. Some people have the impression that they might be cut off if they give up their free time. Also, volunteers should not be seen as any threat to the already employed."

To be absolutely covered, take a few minutes to fill out the 2-page VW1 form (<http://bit.ly/vcKIWT>) and hand it into your local social welfare office.

Blue Drum – 10 Years

Community arts organisation Blue Drum this year celebrates 10 years working with families and communities.

Thousands of community workers have been trained in the arts and Blue Drum has developed a volunteer programme and an arts and health programme.

"Gone are the days when art is put in its box as a tool, therapy or trophy," said director Ed Carroll. "Our work continues to be ambitious and precarious."

Traditionally, community arts work has been dogged by poor facilities, materials and skills – which made attracting the support of local arts organisations and offices vital.

Funded by the Family Support Agency and receiving €80,000 in funding, the organisation works with 107 Family Resource Centres (FRCs).

Over the next decade Blue Drum sees its role as an advocate of artwork in and by communities, promoting local art practices and expressive life.

"A core part of our work will be to convince others about the public value



of this work," said Mr Carroll. The organisation is committed to promoting cultural rights.

Recently, Blue Drum, in response to thousands of requests, organised hundreds of artist workshop days for FRCs, to showcase the work of Travellers, children and women.

Like many other community projects, the organisation faces cutbacks.

"This work won't just get cut-back but cut-out," added Mr Carroll. "We need advocates who are loyal supporters of making more artwork happen in local communities."

Blue Drum is registered as a charity and managed by five part-time project leaders and three volunteers.

the EU and local volunteer events were organised in every county and indeed country.

A European volunteer 'Roadshow' toured Ireland in August – 70 Irish organisations took part.

"We held three volunteer roadshows," Ciara Herrity of Volunteer Sligo said, "and we held a week of activities, most of them events to recognise the contribution of volunteers in the lead-up to the National Day of Volunteering on September 30th."

Over 8,000 people took part in community and charity events across the country on that day.

"From my own experiences in Sligo," Ms. Herrity said, "participation rates seem to be quite good. We advertise through our database of people and local community notes and don't find it difficult to get people involved."

She too bemoans the governments decision in the last census not to add an option for people to identify themselves as volunteers, as she believes the numbers volunteering have increased in the last five years.

"It would be very interesting if we could note a trend or pattern," she said, "though without the statistics we don't have any hard evidence."

With that in mind, let's hope the European Year of the Volunteer leads to a continued increase in participation rates. We won't know however if we don't keep count!

*Note: Volunteer Ireland is a new organisation born from the merger of Volunteering Ireland with Volunteer Centres Ireland. The LCDP supports 25 volunteer centres around the country and all Local Development Companies support and promote volunteering.

HELENA DEANE, business consultant and volunteer, explains the resurrected idea of Open Fair Days and gives some valuable information on how to set one up.



Volunteers restart 'Open Fair Days'

BY HELENA DEANE*

The Open Fairs idea from 20 years ago is being revitalised and broadened as a counterbalance to the current recession.

This year, fairs were held in Clare and Mayo. Further Fairs are planned for 2012 in counties Roscommon, Kerry, Kilkenny, Dublin and Donegal.

'Open' is shorthand for One Person Enterprise and the aim is for the fairs to evolve into a national movement of free, community-based talent exchanges, organised by volunteers.

They give communities a chance to

discover what services and products originate locally while offering enterprising individuals a showcase for their talents.

They're for everyone from graphic designers to biscuit bakers, musicians to tax advisers, landscape gardeners to surfing instructors – you name it!

The fairs are designed for people on a tight budget, possibly without a website, working from home, and not normally able to participate in a fair.

The aim is to help you to make a living from your own skills, ideas and initiative.

The Open Fairs idea builds on a concept developed in the early 1990s by Rural Resettlement Ireland in

partnership with Clare VEC. The project then was grant-aided by the EU.

The current project is part-funded by anonymous Irish-American donors via the Ireland Fund.

The fairs are not open to retailers: you must be promoting a product or service of your own. Participation is free for exhibitors and visitors.

Open Fairs are organised in collaboration with the VEC and community groups and held in venues such as schools, community halls and hotels.

This year, two fairs were hosted by the West County Hotel in Ennis, Co. Clare while another was held

in Feakle Community Hall. An open fair held in early December in Castlebar was hosted by the Royal Theatre.

We found that commercial venues were very welcoming, in fact hotels asked me to organise follow up fairs on their premises: they get positive publicity by association, and generate income from food and drink purchased by those attending.

Everything is achieved with zero budget. There is no charge for the tickets. Everything is based on goodwill and voluntary effort. Support for brochures and posters is provided by the Open Fair office.

PROMOTION & ADVERTISING

There is no budget for promotion and advertising, so it is all about advertising on social media, through networking and posters. The local press and radio are asked to publicise the event, for free. Fairs in Mayo received free publicity from local press and community radio stations. I have also approached local development companies, chambers of commerce, business innovation centres who have advertised our events via facebook, twitter and e-mail.

HOW TO RUN A FAIR

Step 1: Contact the Open Fair office for help, advice and promotional materials.

Step 2. Set up local



Open Fair Days became popular across the country 20 years ago.

organising committee, and secure a venue. Community groups, sporting bodies, local voluntary organisations, business and retail networks or church groups may agree to share the responsibility of running an Open Fair.

Step 3: Once you've set a date, the Open Fair will

provide an application form containing those details.

Step 4: Offer local enterprise development agencies, local development companies, etc an opportunity to promote their services at the Open Fair.

If you'd like to exhibit at an Open Fair in any of the counties listed earlier, download an application form from Openfair.ie.

T: 065 905 8034.

E: info@openfair.ie.

Address: Open Fair, Kilbaha, Kilrush, Co Clare.

* Helena Deane is a business consultant and regular volunteer who is heavily involved in Open Fairs.

Nationwide support for volunteering

Dublin is well-covered with volunteer centres in five locations where you can drop in and see what the needs are in your area and what best suits you. Outside the capital, 17 counties have volunteer centres while local development companies support volunteering in every county.

The website volunteer.ie gives local contact information for every county.



new forms of fund-raising

Country will be clean as a whistle shortly

- Communities hoovering up scrap metal to raise funds

Keeping a local community organisation or sports club going can be a costly affair and many took to collecting scrap metal this year to raise money.

GAA clubs led the way and the idea spread like wildfire because donating costs nothing for local residents and it's financially rewarding for the clubs.

Steel, for instance, has seen its value shoot up from €30 to €220 per tonne in less than 12 months.

Portmarnock Community School collected scrap to raise funds for a project in Lesotho. Meelin

Nick Morrissey, Shane Fitzgerald, Paul Kiely, Dan Malone helping out at Fedamore GAA Club's 'Scrap Saturday.'

GAA Club in Co. Cork also jumped on the idea. So too did Castleisland Soccer Club. The list goes on.

The first to notice the skyrocketing prices were criminal gangs and across the country they've stolen everything from beerkegs to bronzeworks.

But in Donegal for instance, it is the GAA that is doing best from the rising prices by holding 'Scrap Saturday' collections.

Buncrana GAA chairman Paul McGonigle told the 'Donegal Democrat' that members were much happier collecting scrap than "traipsing around in the snow" to sell tickets for the Christmas draw, their traditional fund-raiser.

Travel 383 kilometres south and it's no different.

"It has become a common enough way of fundraising," Alan Shire of Fedamore GAA Club in Co. Limerick told us. "Knockainey National School, for instance, raised over €20,000."

His club were hoping for even a quarter of that amount, but they too found their expectations were exceeded and Fedamore brought in over €7,000.

Such a collection isn't without its hazards, however. Criminal gangs have in the past stolen the goods after a collection.

"You could say that schemes like this might draw trouble onto ourselves," Alan said, "but the benefits outweigh the cons."

Another obstacle for a time was GAA headquarters which initially discouraged the practice. In February, it wrote to clubs nationwide pointing out that scrap metal collections are not covered by the association's liability insurance.



Furthermore, the letter said that GAA properties should not be used "under any circumstance" for storing collected metal.

In Donegal, the local county council insisted that the clubs comply with the Waste Management Act.

Fedamore, however, made sure that everything was above board before their collection on November 26th. "We checked with the County Council, the Gardaí and the County Board and we were approved," Alan said. "We found that as long as you go with a licensed recycler and you manage to get rid of it on the day, everything is fine."

They collected everything from old cookers, ironing boards, radiators, unwanted cars, corrugated iron, batteries and worn saucepans and to drink cans - things that most people would only throw out or bring to a recycling plant anyway.

By pure coincidence, November 19-27th marked European Week for Waste Reduction.

Now, with community and voluntary groups nearly certain to have funding cut in the budget, it's likely that shortly there won't be a scrap of metal left in the country.

Time to think again.

**- REPORTING BY
ALLEN MEAGHER & CONOR
HOGAN**

Nu Ceathrú Máistir - FOUR MASTERS G.A.A. CLUB
Training Pitch Development Fund

SCRAP SATURDAYS

NOVEMBER 12TH & 19TH
Bring your unwanted SCRAP METAL items to Tir Conaill Park between 9AM and 4PM

ITEMS INCLUDE - scrap cars, scrap steel, washing machines, gas cookers, copper, brass, stainless steel, aluminium, scaffolding, electric cables, head engines, electric motors, hand acid batteries, old gates, old farm machinery, cast iron fireplaces, etc.

For collection services of heavy items, old machinery etc or if you require further information please contact the following:

Seán Dunne	(087) 2300735	Tommy Brennan	(087) 870404	Frank O'Sullivan	(087) 802887
Barry O'Connell	(087) 8700053	Paul Ward	(087) 8471406	Michael Martin	(087) 8700005

Newmarket G.A.A. Clubs
SCRAP METAL COLLECTION WEEKEND

Clean up your home or farmyard.
Bring your unwanted scrap metal, farm machinery, batteries, electrical goods etc.
Dispose of it free

Doing so will help Newmarket GAA raise funds

No fridges, freezers, timber, plastics or tyres

When:
Friday, July 15th. 7 - 9p.m.
Saturday, July 16th. 10a.m. - 4p.m.

Where:
Newmarket G.A.A. Grounds
see list of items suitable for collection on reverse

SCRAP SATURDAY

Thanks to all for contributing to a great success.

Thank you

A photograph of a pile of scrap metal, including various pieces of metal, pipes, and other debris.



INTRO

Dr Eileen Humphreys has written an article about local development in Ireland that is as up-to-date as you'll find.

'Local Development in Ireland: Review of the Current Position, Lessons and Future Challenges' was published in August.

Dr Humphreys penned the piece for www.LDnet.eu which brings together views from across Europe on how best to support local development work.

The UL and Thurles-based lecturer began by pointing out that co-operative working has been at the heart of rural communities in Ireland for a long time.

Over recent decades, the EU's influence grew and it pushed "local development" which evolved to encompass social inclusion work while continuing to seek ways to support local enterprise and employment development. Local development work now also means supporting citizen and community participation in decision-making on public policy.

Dr Humphreys' article brings readers through recent changes and the likely future role of local development in Ireland including what she describes as its recent "institutionalisation". In reviewing the Local and Community Development Programme she says it's early days yet, but already there are lessons to be learned, issues to face up to. She also talks about the challenges ahead.

To read the full article, go to LDnet.eu. Here we publish the bulk of her concluding remarks under the title 'Lessons and Issues':

The challenges ahead in local development

While there are new structures, a new programme and new procedures in place, it will take some time to see how well these will function in promoting local development and social inclusion.

...There is likely to be more pressure to show "hard" impact on the problems and, with deeply embedded problems and less favourable economic conditions, it may be more difficult to do so.

In the interest of greater accountability, models of development which are less flexible and are not particularly amenable to the spirit of local development (taking local initiative) and innovation are now in place.

There are great challenges here.

The structures are established as not-for-profit bodies and so too is the central intermediary body, Pobal, responsible for management of these initiatives. To a large extent in the public mind, these are seen as an extension of the state apparatus.

It could be argued that overdependence on state funding is incompatible with the role in promoting civil society development and, over recent years of social partnership, the whole approach was based on a consensus

model.

Over-dependence on state funding has led to sterility in local development. This may be the result of local development being treated as a delivery system for public programmes?

It has certainly evolved in this direction.

Linked to this and the new governance debate, the civil society agenda and the role of advocacy are likely to be diluted in the local development structures. However, it could be argued that the more strategic structures (local partnerships) were not strong on this in recent years.

This space may be filled by more political activation, led by elites working to mobilise people from the grass roots - e.g. platforms to promote organisation and engage citizens, promote protest and alternative policies especially now linked to the substantial cuts in public expenditure on services and increased taxes associated with the EU/IMF bailout.

More engagement by citizens and communities is desirable.

It can be argued that genuine change requires a move away from consensus politics led by organisations almost totally dependent on state funding. In changed circumstances, community engagement might not be so elusive but different processes may

be required to develop it? This is a further challenge.

The wider reform of local government is still outstanding. There is a view that when this happens, the local development structures will be brought within the control of local government. At present, this is not a scenario favoured by the local development sector as it is considered that the sectors (local development v. local government) operate with very different institutional cultures.

The latest reforms of local development (cohesion) may be one step before formal absorption into the state. The structures are clearly moving in this direction.

The knowledge drawn from the past seems less relevant in these times when the solutions to employment problems and social cohesion are much less obvious but have an even higher place on the political agenda. It is not just about creating jobs but social, community and environmental sustainability and how we go about collective decision-making into the future.

Perhaps there was never a greater need for social innovation and the re-invention of the spirit of local development?



Keeping it simple

In <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slang> slang an 'anorak' is a person who has a very strong interest, perhaps obsessive, in niche subjects. And so it is with community development practitioners who stray off the streets and into academia.

Without them however, we'd suffer from policy drift. And if you know what that means, you're on the right page.

'Changing Ireland' is a magazine for local volunteers, paid workers in community development, policy professionals and the people they work with. We prefer to keep the language free of lingo, but occasionally we let the rule drop.

You can seek to influence Government policies through street protest, online campaigns or for instance by writing essays.

They all have their merits and if you're making fresh observations, we're interested.

Arklow: Men leave their shed in a boat

*LEFT to RIGHT
– George Craine, Cyril
Fitzgerald, Yannes Muller
(front rower), Michael My-
ler (back rower), Matthew
Ryan, Joe Ryan.*



BY ALAN JACQUES

The 25 members of Arklow Men's Sheds Group made waves recently as they kept their hometown's long and proud tradition of boat building alive with the launch of their 20ft timber dory. Named 'An Bád Inbhear Mór', the rowing boat took 13 weeks to build at a workshop in Croghan Industrial Estate with timber sourced from the 'TSV Asgard II' supply.

The Arklow Boat Project, captured the imagination of the entire community and 16 men from the local Men's Sheds Group, ranging in age from 30 to 60, participated in the project. According to Katy Hughes of Arklow CDP, the project has played a huge role in getting the men's group up and running in the community.

"This project has brought about a great sense of hope and pride not only to the men involved, but to the whole town. The boat was paraded through the centre of the town with a pipe band on the day of its launch and there was a great buzz. There was such great excitement when it finally took to water and it did exactly what it was supposed to do," said Ms Hughes.

'An Bád Inbhear Mór' has since been donated to Arklow Sea Scouts. The Sheds group also continues to put their boat building skills to great use having built dinghies and canoes in recent weeks.

The training involved was conducted under Goal 2 of the Local and Community Development Programme which seeks to increase access to formal and informal educational, recreational and cultural activities and resources.

Ms Hughes told 'Changing Ireland' that many groups contributed to the success of the project including Arklow Pipe Band, Arklow Sea Scouts, Arklow Women's Club, the Harbour Bar and other local businesses.

Arklow has a long and proud tradition of boat building, most notably for building timber boats such as Francis Chichester's 'Gypsy Moth III' and the 'TSV Asgard II' from which timber was sourced for the making of 'An Bád Inbhear Mór'.

The men's boat project was coordinated by Arklow CDP which is part of County Wicklow Partnership and received funding from the Department of Social Protection and County

Australia gives us Ugg boots, Fosters and now Men's Sheds



BY CONOR HOGAN

Smaller housing complexes had, by the early 90s, left less room for Australians to have their traditional large back-yard sheds. Men, especially retired ones, therefore, were often left without a place to go or activities to get on with. As a result, the concept of community sheds was born, and it has since become something of a phenomenon in that country. Like Ugg boots, Fosters and Home and Away, the export has since taken off in Ireland.

"Each shed is as individual as the men involved," John Evoy of the Irish Men's Sheds Association told us. "Most involve the use of tools, fixing motorbikes, upholstery, that kind of thing. There are usually about five or six projects on the go at once. At the same time, there will be men there drinking tea or playing darts – they are a hive of activity."

As traditionally men have been less encouraged than women to be interested in their own wellbeing, the sheds have become an excellent medium by which to

tackle the problem of mental health.

Australian professor and Men's Sheds researcher Barry Golding estimated that since the Australian network began, it has saved roughly 2,000 lives from suicide in that country.

"Feeling isolated and having a poor social network," John Evoy says, "is equally as bad for your health as being a heavy drinker, and twice as bad as being a heavy smoker or obese."

Potential members shouldn't be put off by the prospect of boring seminars, however, as that is not the approach the organisation take.

John says: "A coordinator in the country told me that they had trouble getting people to join, as the men didn't believe there was anything wrong. The problem isn't the reason to join. We aren't called the Men's Health programme and we don't give lectures. We want people to come along because they have assets like time and energy."

"I'll give one example of how problems end up getting discussed. There was one shed where there was no running toilet at the time and the men kept having to go outside. This led to a conversation about how many times each was going to the toilet, which resulted in a spontaneous discussion about the prostate, and the importance of getting it checked."

You can find out how to join a local Men's Shed, or set up a prospective one near you, by contacting the Irish Association at their website Menssheds.ie.

Hate-case dismissed after three-hour hearing

ALLEN MEAGHER REPORTS FROM KILLARNEY DISTRICT COURT

A landmark court case was heard on September 30th, in Killarney District Court, following a Garda investigation into complaints over the setting up of an anti-Traveller Facebook site called 'Promote the Use of Knacker Babies As Bait'.

Patrick Kissane (27), of Knockasartnett, Killarney, Co Kerry, appeared before the court charged with an offence under the Incitement to Hatred Act 1989.

The defendant apologised for setting up the site which was in existence for eight months and after a three-hour hearing the case was dismissed by Judge James O'Connor. He ruled there was reasonable doubt that there was an intent to incite hatred towards members of the Traveller community.

Judge O'Connor had questioned witness Mary Boyne, a Traveller, asking her had she personally experienced an increase in hate directed towards her after Mr Kissane set up



Pat Kissane

his site.

She replied, "No."

Both Ms Boyne and another witness Patricia O'Brien had felt frightened for their children when they first found out about the Facebook page.

Asked to account for his behaviour, Mr

Kissane claimed an incident had occurred in a bar in which he worked involving Travellers and within hours of that incident he set up the site.

"I felt angry and powerless. Sitting in front of the computer was the coward's way of doing it because I wasn't able to handle myself in the bar earlier," he told the court.

Defence solicitor Pat F O'Connor told the court his client was "sickened" by his own behaviour.

Before he dismissed the case, Judge O'Connor said that had other material come to light that showed the defendant had more involvement in anti-Traveller sites than appeared then he might have looked differently on the matter.

For an audio report, you can download a podcast interview conducted by Sunshine Radio with Allen Meagher after the court case: <http://bit.ly/vJuEQj>

PAVEE POINT: "Disappointed" with outcome

Pavee Point director Martin Collins said after the court case, "We are disappointed there wasn't a prosecution, it might send out a message that this is acceptable behaviour, that you can get away with it."

He thought it was a "very limited way" to measure the impact of the defendant's behaviour to ask a witness if she



Martin Collins

personally had experienced an increase in hate after the anti-Traveller Facebook page was set up.

"It was an inadequate way of measuring if there was an increase in racist sentiment across the country," said Mr Collins.

Although Facebook appear to be blocking anti-Traveller pages since the issue was highlighted, Mr Collins was dismissive.

"I've no confidence in Facebook to police this properly. Nothing to do with Travellers, but for wider reasons - they're interested in profit - I don't believe they're sincere about monitoring or policing it."

He called again for the hate-crime legislation to be overhauled.

"It's not effective. Yet it's still important for people to make complaints so that cases reach the courts. That's the only way to highlight the inefficiencies in the legislation. Also, if cases aren't brought, people might think racism is not an issue."

WITNESS PROUD: "We accomplished Something"

Mary Boyne appeared as a witness in the court case and despite the outcome of the case she was "happy with where we got to."

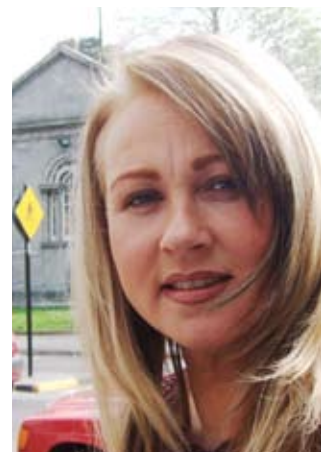
"I'm proud. I know well I accomplished something by making my complaint."

She didn't enjoy being in the witness stand but would do it again.

"It was like I was up for doing something they way they questioned me," she remarked.

She advised anyone who might make a complaint like she did to know the Incitement to Hatred Act "off by heart."

"I'd be smarter and wiser about the court proceedings if I went again. For example, I didn't know I could interrupt the judge when I didn't understand what he was



Mary Boyne

asking me.

Ms Boyne said, "A lot of people were disgusted by the court's judgement."

"Don't let this put you off. Make your complaints if you see racism, there could well be a conviction on a different day."

Fresh start as 500 support Diversity Day



Youths of Longford - Eileena Osasenagha Eboigbe, Jennifer Ize Iyamu, Miracle Johnathan, Diana Akenkor, Raymond Sarfo, Desmond Akenbor, David Johnathan. Photograph courtesy of shelleycorcoran-photography.com * See more of Shelley's photos from the day on 'Changing Ireland's facebook site.

Disadvantaged young people are among the LCDP's 18 target group and the support given by Longford Community Resources to youth groups certainly seems to be paying off.

BY COMMUNITY WORKER, BENSON OGBOKO*

Longford has witnessed the birth of a new beginning in the cultural integration of diverse communities that have made the town a home.

On August 13th well over 500 persons attended Cultural Diversity Day, a festival of song, music, dance, arts and food from different continents.

The young men and women in Longford Multicultural Youth Group organised the event – which was broadcast live on Shannonside radio – and they were overwhelmed with the turn out and the way it went.



The youth group had the support of many other local organisation in the run-up to the event, in particular Longford Community Resources. They would like to see similar events organised by youths in other counties.

Held in the Temperance Hall, the day featured everything from band music, dance and karaoke to fashion and magic.

The organisers are already looking forward to next year in Longford, although the lack of funding in some areas is a challenge.

One of the biggest attractions was an art gallery organised by the Cameroonian communities in Limerick and Longford.

People came and went, interacting with each other, making new friends and showing the joy and glamour of having a community of diverse culture.

People taking part came from Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, South Africa, East Europe, Asia and the Travelling Community in Ireland and many other ethnic groups.

The day was organised in partnership with major funder Longford Community Resources Limited, Longford Acorn Project, Attic Youth Café, Foroige Youth Club among others, various community groups and churches in Longford, volunteers, the Longford schools programme, music and dance groups, artist and lovers of cultures and food.

* Benson Ogboko is the co-ordinator of Longford Multicultural Youth Group. He is a community and voluntary sector representative on the board of Longford Community Resources Ltd.

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New Women's Aid service for immigrants

Are you working with a female immigrant experiencing domestic violence who has difficulty speaking English?

Women's Aid in September launched a translation service for women experiencing violence or abuse in the home.

The service is provided over the phone via the organisation's helpline (1800 341 900) which is open from 10am-10pm seven days a week.

Women's Aid provides support to community organisations nationwide to deal with violence against women and receives funding through the LCDP.

Said Laura Shehan of Women's Aid: "CDPs and LDCs often serve as a first point of contact for women experiencing domestic violence and



our national helpline is a resource to workers in the Programme where they can refer women on to receive support and information from a front-line service."

"The new translation service gives all our helpline support workers the ability to connect women with limited or no English to an accredited and professional

translator. They can facilitate the conversation between the woman and the support worker, that the woman can access support and information appropriate to her needs," she added.

Addressing an appeal to community workers to use the service, Ms Shehan pointed out:

The translation service is available in a few easy steps:

1. You or the woman can call 1800-341-900
2. When a support worker answers the phone, state the language she wishes to communicate in.
3. Wait for a moment on hold while we connect to a translator
4. The woman may then speak to the helpline worker about her situation, via the translator on the line.

WEBSITE IN EIGHT LANGUAGES

If community workers are wondering how else Women's Aid can also provide community workers with leaflets in seven languages covering domestic violence and the services available.

The website, www.women-said.ie is also translated into eight languages (including Irish). In addition, there are resources available on the website to inform your best practice with minority ethnic women experiencing domestic violence.

“I gained confidence; we all benefitted” - says 19-year-old organiser



Young people in Longford are putting it up to youth groups around the country to organise big multicultural events,

REPORTS CONOR HOGAN.

Emeka Iroaganachi, 19, is president of the Longford Multicultural Youth Group and he and his friends spent a year organising for one event in particular.

It wasn't easy because as Emeka points out, in many Asian and African countries, there is “almost too much respect for elders, and children aren't listened to.”

“When I originally joined the group,” he tells us, “I had little interest or motivation. Then last year, I visited Belgium and saw what youth groups there were able to do, the cooperation between different nationalities. It motivated me to go out and do something, get something off the ground.”

Cultural Diversity Day was one of the biggest events they committed to organising.

“From when we first started planning it until it took place, the whole process took about a year. It was hard to convince people and explain the benefits to them, but we managed to get sponsors such as Eircom on board and Longford County Council and Longford Community Resources helped.

“Other things, on the organisational end, that had to be sorted as the day approached, was getting the lighting correct and the setting of the sound system, and many other things.”

The effort paid off, and the response to the event was as good as they could possibly have imagined.

“It developed slowly, but by the end of the day, the place was packed out. People definitely benefitted from the interaction and gained a different understanding.

“Personally speaking, I gained a lot of self-confidence from the experience. In many Asian and African countries, there is almost too much respect for elders, and children aren't listened

to. Many of them are scared to stand up for themselves.

“It is important that they are given confidence, something to look up to. The need to be given a voice, and for that to happen you have to go out and do things yourself,” he said.

One of the obstacles for a group such as Emekas is keeping it up and running. “We need more funding,” he says, “A lot of the time we rely on our parents to keep the group going.” The group meets every Sunday at the Attic

Youth Cafe in the Temperance Hall, Longford Town.

E: ongfordmyg@gmail.com.

Is it multi- or inter-culturalism?

Eight years ago, David Denby from the School of Applied Language & Interculturalism told ‘Changing Ireland’ there was a significant difference between the two terms “inter-cultural” and “multi-cultural.”

“Multi-culturalism pins labels on groups and cements existing blocks and therefore becomes a charter for apartheid. Inter-culturalism is about groups entering into dialogue, communication, interchange and exchange (and) helps to bridge the gap between different moral norms and viewpoints.”

However, Dr. Ronit Lentin disagreed:

“I think there is no difference between multi- and inter-culturalism because both terms are imposed from above.”

Your thoughts?!

Ingredients for a perfect intercultural day

- Duration: 4 hours.
- Audience: 500+.
- Highlight: Art gallery.
- Music: 5 bands and a choir
- MC: Peter Masterson
- Weather: Very warm and sunny.
- Organisers: Youth.

Fresh start for Longford

Longford's youth groups have also made waves nationally, with one taking the top prize at the Foróige Youth Citizenship Awards in November.

The Attic Youth Café established in Longford town in 2006 won thanks to their introduction of an unique student discount card.

The awards show was presented as ‘Ireland's Top Teens’ on TV3.

It was the second time in three years that the Attic Youth Café won a national award; the previous one was for promoting active citizenship.

Fatima turned negative media coverage around 100% - UL seminar on neighbourhood stigmatisation

Media coverage of Fatima Mansions over a six-year period up to 2005 showed a dramatic turnaround, demonstrating once again (see previous editions of 'Changing Ireland') that communities can change perceptions and can challenge unfair reporting.

The Dublin neighbourhood was regularly thumped by the tabloids in the late '90s, however the community learned to turn the media from enemy to friend.

Brian Conway of NUI Maynooth examined the issue in detail and presented his findings on November 4th at a 'Stigmatising Neighbourhoods' event held in Limerick and organised by UL's Department of Sociology.

In Mr Conway's study titled "The Miracle of Fatima - Media Framing and the Regeneration of a Dublin Housing Estate" he reported that while published photographs of Fatima were 100 per cent negative in 1999, they were 100 per cent positive by '06.

There was a marked improvement in print reporting, with 60% more positive reporting about Fatima Mansions, 32% less negative coverage. Mixed or neutral reports were 90% more common than in '99.

So how exactly did perceptions change so significantly?

Firstly, Conway found that there had been a change in emphasis for journalists since 1999 since they were less likely to rely on "official sources" or as he called them "street-level bureaucrats."

While he found that 'elites' were only referenced 9% less by '05, what was significant was that residents were 64% more likely to be asked for their opinion, while articles were also 64% more likely to have opinion or comment from



Amanda Haynes, Martin Power and Peadar Kirby.

both types of sources.

Over the six years, community organisations were established such as the Fatima United Group which engaged in leadership development among the local community. Local residents produced their own reports about their community, about the strengths and weaknesses of living there. One of the most important things they did, however, was making allies and coalitions with the media.

They set out to portray the regeneration programme as positively as possible, seeking as much publicity as they could garner and currying favour with media elites.

One of the best examples of this, was when the Pat Kenny Show was taken on location to The Fatima Mansions eleven years ago.

RTÉ and residents worked together to co-produce the story of the estate.

Changing perceptions is a task that takes time and Fatima is probably an exception rather than the norm.

Dr Conway still believes crime gets a disproportionate amount of coverage from the media, who often follow the mantra "if it bleeds, it leads."

The example of Fatima, however, shows that it can also be used as a weapon to actually challenge and transform people's perceptions.

96% NEGATIVE REPORTING ON MOYROSS

A study presented on November 4th by UL's Amanda Haynes, Eoin Devereux and Martin Power looked at reporting for 2006 and '07, when social unrest was at its highest in Moyross. The sociologists studied over 420 articles and 24 news reports and found that a mere 4% of the media coverage at the time was positive.

Editors consistently described Moyross in headlines as 'troubled', a term found in over 30 articles or as 'notorious', a 'blackspot', a 'timebomb' or a 'warzone'. The estate was only referenced as 'a community' on

three of 444 reports.

The negative perception of Moyross had a significant impact on the lives of the residents, be it not being able to get mortgages or having to put a different address on their CV or job application to even be considered for interviews.

However, Moyross has turned much of the coverage around since the study was conducted four years ago.

Where previously there was not a single positive portrayal of the area in Google's or Youtube's top ten listings, positive online reports and videos now dominate the rankings.

Both residents and community groups played their part and sometimes Moyross got a lucky break - for instance the 'Irish News of The World' is gone and is no loss to the area.

Meanwhile, Moyross native Keith Earls joined the Irish rugby team.

Staff and volunteers in 'Changing Ireland' have also been involved, setting up a blog and website for the area and using official complaints procedures to oblige newspapers to publish corrections when they get reports wrong.

Good news about the regeneration of the area has also spread. Sometimes graffiti in the area even helped as journalists were often dumbstruck to see "I love Moyross" written on walls.

However diminished, the stigma remains a challenge for local residents, moreso during the recession.

Among those who attended the UL event was broadcaster Vincent Browne.

More info: www3.ul.ie/sociology/static/stigma/

**- REPORTING BY
CONOR HOGAN AND
ALLEN MEAGHER**

3 ways to improve a community's reputation

CONOR HOGAN REPORTS

Three things must be tackled if communities are to overcome neighbourhood stigmatisation says Mattieu Permentier who works in the Institute of Social Research in Holland.

Mr Permentier recently completed a study into neighbourhood reputations and the impact on people's life-chances. He visited Ireland on November 4th to present his findings.

In Kanaleneiland, Utrecht, where he's from told him that pizzas were not being delivered and cabs sometimes failed to show up. In Rotterdam, people from certain areas are excluded from getting mortgages.

This exclusion - based on reputation - influences residents' self-image and Mr Permentier noted a trend among residents to internalise their stigma; they blame themselves and feel somehow undeserving.

What was also notable about

the stigmatised neighbourhoods was that they each had their own 'micro-hierarchies'. He said that people in the perceived 'bad areas' tended to shift the blame for the bad reputation onto smaller parts of their neighbourhood.

People on the west-side would blame the east, the east would blame immigrants, the Turkish would blame the Moroccans, the Moroccans would claim that it was only people on one street, the people on that street would blame a particular family and so on and so forth.

He also found that local residents thought more highly of their area than outsiders who were influenced by hearsay and the media.

Mr Permentier gave the example of a woman in her nineties whose friends no longer visited her anymore because her area's reputation had been damaged by unfair media reporting.

He said two elements apart



Kanaleneiland Utrecht.

from crime tended to bring an area's reputation down:

- a high number of young people living in a place.
- a significant immigrant population.

Mr Permentier said three elements must be tackled to improve reputations: crime (the easiest to tackle, in his opinion), socio-economic conditions and ethnic composition. He believes serious improvements follow

work to increase the social mix in neighbourhoods.

This solution, he admits, is controversial and would be hard to sustain, as people like to stay among their 'own kind'.

Another approach would be to make big PR efforts, or to build more shopping centres or community facilities. He said that changing reputations in the short-term is difficult work.

Dirty streets – don't point the finger too fast! - British and Irish experience

The press love to publish photographs of run-down and dirty streets in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, often heaping the blame on local residents.

Sometimes it's down to illegal dumping by criminal gangs and neglect by the local authorities, as in Limerick,

where a community group went to Brussels to petition the EU and shamed the city council into action.

The EU Petitions Committee visited the city in 2008 and were "horrified and deeply moved" with what it saw, calling it "a situation resembling a scene from the developing world."

The area is now a clean, grassy field.

"Rubbish isn't an issue for us anymore, it's history," a local community worker told us. "There is now much better co-operation between residents groups, estate management and the local authorities."

The build-up or illegal dumping of rubbish in disadvantaged areas is a problem in British housing estates too and Annette Hastings of the University of Glasgow explained why at a UL seminar held in Ballinacurra in November of this year.

She said the stigmatisation of disadvantaged neighbourhoods by the media weakens the interest that local authorities have in

cleaning such areas.

In Britain, she found that street sweepers were not as likely to clean streets well in disadvantaged areas because they considered their efforts futile.

Hastings said favouritism was shown to middle-class housing estates and that more resources should be spent cleaning disadvantaged areas.

Ms Hastings' findings about the stigmatising of neighbourhoods are published in the following paper: Dean, J. and Hastings, A. (2000) Challenging Images: Housing Estates, Stigma and Regeneration. Bristol: Polity Press/Joseph Rowntree Foundation.



The scene in Clarina Gardens, Ballinacurra Weston, Limerick, in July 2008 and in November 2011.

Dail Report

2 day debate over Community Sector

BY CONOR HOGAN

On October 11th and 12th, the Dail debated the work of the voluntary and community sector, prompted by a motion from Laois-Offaly TD Brian Stanley (SF).

The motion ran to two pages calling for recognition for the Sector and in particular for the Government "to establish an All-Ireland Consultative Civic Forum promised by the Good Friday Agreement, which would enable communities to engage with others across civic society and across the country and share information, learning and best practice on an all-Ireland basis."

Stanley noted that "even when public spending went up in 2009, the then government still cut the sector's funding, with the new government quite happy to keep up this tradition."

He blasted the Government for "disproportionally" targeting the voluntary and community sectors (especially those working in the area of drug use and addiction) despite their "proven track-record and value."

Overall, he estimated 5,000 jobs had been lost.

Several other Sinn Féin TDs spoke after him:

- Aengus O'Snodaigh said the hearts of communities have been "ripped out."
- Gerry Adams referenced the payout to Anglo-Irish and asked what €700 million could do in terms of helping our people.
- Donegal's Pearse Doherty noted there were "more than 7,500 charitable, community and voluntary groups across the State, providing full-time employment to 50,000 people."
- Others censured the government for not supporting community art projects and drew attention to 24% cuts in childcare programmes this



Maureen O'Sullivan, independent T.D.

year.

The then Minister of State Housing and Planning, Willie Penrose (Lab) replied. He said the Government "recognises that the community and voluntary sector plays a crucial role in supporting social, community, economic and cultural life throughout Ireland" and "we have a responsibility to protect the vulnerable and disadvantaged in our communities". They will have to do so, however, at a "significantly reduced cost to the public purse".

He pointed to "considerable achievements" that had been made for instance by reducing the number of local bodies and by reconvening the Forum on Philanthropy. He said it was important to encourage a greater level of contributions from companies, which give on average only about 8% of what British corporations donate to charity. This could be achieved, he concluded, with efficient tax and legal frameworks. He stated that non-profits should "adapt to new realities" and attempt to partner more with corporations.

Galway West TD Eamon O Cuiv (FF) claimed that if responsibility for the voluntary sector and the partnerships is shifted to the local authorities, the taxpayer would end up with a much higher bill.

Maureen O'Sullivan (IND) of Dublin meanwhile took issue with the misuse by some organisations of the word "voluntary", noting how some "executives are on extremely high salaries and have lucrative expense accounts. They are doing a disservice to the real volunteers throughout the country who give so freely of their time."

She supported a call to allocate €3 million to the community sector from the Criminal Assets

“
Maureen O'Sullivan supported a call to allocate €3 million to the community sector from the Criminal Assets Bureau.
“

Bureau, under the Proceeds of Crime Act.

Minister of the Environment, Community and Local Government, Phil Hogan, was meanwhile criticised by Richard Boyd Barrett, the People Before Profit TD, for his non-attendance.

Cork North Central TD Dara Murphy (FG) rejected the claim of disproportionate cuts to the voluntary and community sector claiming that "in fact the reverse [was] the case", which party colleague Sean Kyne from Galway West agreed with.

Minister of State John Perry drew attention to the funding of 64 national voluntary organizations announced during the summer. The TD for Sligo-North Leitrim clarified that the Government "does not see philanthropy and fund-raising as a substitute for State funding (but) rather as an untapped potential which can further support the not-for-profit sector."

Mary Lou McDonald (SF) from Dublin was having none of it, however, saying "We've been told that the philanthropists will come and save the day... I understand that Fine Gael has a slash and burn approach to this sector.

Small government is what it does and it is pretty much every woman, man and child for themselves unless one is a political adviser to one of the bigwigs, and then it seems that money is not a problem."

She then championed the work of the community and voluntary sector, describing their work as heroic. "I salute them," she said, "Their work is patriotic and I salute them all the more because these people are the champions of their communities".

However, she and her colleagues were labeled "hypocrites" by Labour's Eric Byrne who said Sinn Féin and the DUP had reduced by 70% the funding for the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council.

The Sinn Féin motion among other things called on the Government "to ring-fence €50 million per year from the Dormant Accounts Fund for the community and voluntary sector, ring-fence monies seized by the Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB) for community development and community based drug projects and introduce a VAT refund scheme for charities."

It was rejected by 88 votes to 45.



Brian Stanley

“
Willie Penrose stated that non-profit organisations should “adapt to new realities” and attempt to partner more with corporations.
“

Seanad Debate

Opposition divided over “alignment” proposals



Minister Hogan addressed the issue of “aligning” the local development sector with local government in the Seanad on November 9th. The Local and Community Development Programme was, he said, “a key social inclusion intervention” in tackling poverty and exclusion through partnership between the government and disadvantaged communities.

“The programme is more relevant than ever, given the current economic crisis and the level of unemployment” he said.

He noted that it works to increase access to formal and informal educational activities, increase people’s work readiness and their employment prospects, and provide a solid foundation for employment creation. Also, international evidence suggested Ireland was “leading the way with regard to evaluating the impact of the programme.”

The Programme received €63.5 million this year.

Nonetheless, change is imminent.

“I am convinced,” he said, “that the time has come for local government to take a more proactive role with regard to the social inclusion and quality-of-life aspects of its responsibilities.”

He expects to see local government “take a greater lead in the administration and delivery of

community and local development interventions at a local level.”

He said it was essential to harness the “strengths and experiences of both the local government and the local development sectors,” and to ensure that “the best elements of both are retained in any revised local governance arrangements.”

Hogan praised local development companies, who he described as having “a proven track record when it comes to delivering services for their communities.”

At the same time he pointed out, “It is inherently inefficient and ineffective to have local governance arrangements that perpetuate the funding of multiple local development agencies from a significant number of Departments and State agencies for similar, complementary or overlapping objectives.”

He referred to the new steering group, which he has given a broad remit to, that was established to consider how services can be streamlined, and to draft a “roadmap for delivering simplified, cost-effective and efficient services” and for a closer “alignment”.

“The sheer scale and complexity of the current structures is still daunting,” he commented, saying he intended, as his predecessor did, to get rid of duplication and overlaps in administration.

He noted the non-for-profit

sectors importance to the economy – that it employs 100,000 people, “equivalent to the numbers employed in agriculture.” He also praised the work of unpaid volunteers.

SEANAD REACTION

Senator Cait Keane (FG) a former student of community development, drew attention to the EU’s growing affection for local development as a concept, noting that new regulations – linked to CAP reforms – “reinforce the centrality of community-led local development.”

Labhrás Ó Murchú (FF) welcomed the proposals and expressed astonishment the Minister had kept the details to a tidy four pages.

Fine Gael Senator Cait Keane – no surprise - welcomed the proposals.

Sinn Féin was only allowed one minute of speaking time, something Fianna Fáil deputies also complained about.

Senator Trevor Ó Clochartaigh (SF) described the debate as a “back-slapping exercise.”

He said: “The community and voluntary sector which I am in contact with is in crisis, because of the cutbacks in funding that have happened under the previous Administration and which are being followed through by this Administration.”

He believed that services can be delivered more effectively by a standalone local community organisation rather than by local government.

Minister Hogan disagreed: “I do not believe it can be done efficiently because of the back office services and administrative burden it puts on the local community and also the fact that there is space and capacity in local government to deliver in a properly focused and aligned way.”

Senator Michael Mullins (FG) asked Minister Hogan whether people employed in local development companies “will become employees of the local authority?”

The Minister replied the steering group would look at how best to realign the two.

Later in the debate, the Minister indicated that CE schemes may move under local authority control.

“We are in discussions with the trade union movement and with local government and the Department of Social Protection to roll out in 2012 an expansion of that programme through local government.”



The first Claiming Our Future conference was held in Dublin. Two others have now been held in Galway and Cork.

CIVIL SOCIETY BRIEFS NEW CWC CHAIRPERSON

Helen Lowry has been elected as the new Chairperson of the Community Workers Co-op replacing Siobhán O’Donoghue. Ms Lowry from Mayo is currently employed as community work co-ordinator with the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland.

CLIMATE AND COMMUNITIES

The long-awaited report ‘Towards Climate Justice: a strategy guide for the community sector’ is expected to be launched before the end of the year.

COMMUNITY JOURNAL

The next edition of the Community Work Journal will have two themes: (1) migration, racism and interculturalism and (2) community work in the current context.

COMHAR GOING

The Government is to abolish the Comhar Sustainable Development Council and merge its functions with the National Economic Social Council.

CLAIMING OUR FUTURE

Individuals and people from across a wide range of civil society organisations met in Cork on November 5th for the third Claiming Our Future conference which looked at alternatives to the current failed model of economic development. W: claimingourfuture.ie

Note: The Community Workers’ Co-op, despite funding cuts, remains active and has an involvement in most of the above items.



County's first gay visibility week

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Visibility Week was launched on November 14th in Wexford – the first of its kind in the county.

It was organised by 'Gay Wexford' and supported by Wexford Local Development and LGBT Diversity.

Events included a 'liberating party' celebrating LGBT pride, a lecture about transgender awareness, a slideshow presentation of the Irish Queer Archive, a civil partnership information seminar and a screening of the Hilary Swank movie 'Boys Don't Cry'.

YOUTH RISING



'Youth Rising' in print

Spunout.ie has published 20,000 copies of a new youth magazine called 'Youth Rising' and if your local youth group wants copies, they're available for free.

The magazine has already gone out to schools, colleges, youth centres, cinemas, cafes and other youth settings throughout the country.

'Youth Rising' features the voices of young people covering topics such as unemployment, sexual health, emigration, protest, politics, music and humour. It features a full directory of youth organisations and help services throughout the island of Ireland.

To request bulk copies email: nfo@spunout.ie.

Human rights and equality to merge

The Equality Authority and the Irish Human Rights Commission is being merged as part of what the media are labeling a "quango cull." By February, the two agencies should be replaced by a new body called the Human Rights and Equality Commission.

The justice minister has appointed a "working group" to oversee the merger.

The key questions the working group is said to be looking at are:

What do people want the new body to do? What will be its functions? How will it work?

Urgency to retain Gaeltacht's community services

- issue a "priority" after MFG closure



Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta (MFG) ceased trading in September with the loss of 130 jobs, placing a question mark over the delivery of community services in seven Gaeltacht areas.

In Donegal, for instance, the closure brought a halt to some rural bus services and to insulation work on elderly people's homes.

On September 7th, MFG's board informed the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government and Pobal of its decision to cease trading due to the company's financial situation. MFG delivered the LCDP along with other programmes.

Minister Phil Hogan said at the time: "We are conscious of the direct impact which this decision will have on the company's staff (and) the impact it will have on those who receive services from the company."

Local media reported that the board had talks with the Department and with Pobal in the days that followed to ensure staff receive their entitlements and to "urgently" explore alternative methods of delivering services.

"There are complex legal and contractual issues to be resolved and my Department is currently working on both long and short term solutions to ensure the continued delivery of programmes in Gaeltacht areas," Minister Hogan told the Dail in mid-November.

MFG operated in Gaeltacht areas in Cork, Galway, Mayo, Meath, Donegal, Kerry and Waterford.

The company supported everything



from community work schemes to rural transport, community alert, sports organisations and social housing to name but some. The Minister and his Department saw it as "a priority" to restore services.

Speaking to local media, Galway-based Senator Trevor Ó Clochartaigh asked why the Department or Pobal could not have stepped in sooner, on foot of audit reports, to salvage the company and save jobs, adding, "it is incumbent on the board to explain what has been happening over the last number of years."

Meanwhile, some if not all of the rural bus services in Donegal appear to be up and running again.

Discussions are continuing to restore other services.

- ALLEN MEAGHER

BACKGROUND

MFG was independent, as are all local development companies, and made its own decisions.

The company was established in 1991, had 22 people on its board, included seven regional sub-committees in its structure.

Its main objective was to undertake community development through the social, cultural and economic development of Gaeltacht areas.

€3.6 billion found Horace predicted it!

Like an early Christmas present, Ireland found itself €3.6 BILLION better off than we thought in November due said the Dept of Finance to an "accounting error".

Well, if we were to make use of these billions, it would be:

- the same as giving everyone in Ireland €800 in 'luck-money' for Christmas.
- the same as giving 167,000 unemployed people jobs.
- the same as the amount originally



You can't even make these stories up anymore!

earmarked for regeneration of Limerick's disadvantaged estates.

It's also the same coincidentally as the amount the EU/IMF said we must cut in this year's budget.

It's all rather curious.

German officials found €55 BILLION that went unnoticed in another "error" in October.

Seriously, Horace McDermott, our fictitious good news correspondent predicted as much in the summer of 2010 when he wrote that officials found €22 million lying in a biscuit tin in Anglo Irish Bank.

Horace never imagined he should be thinking in billions. Or that promotion was likely for the official who got the blame. The incredible becomes reality.

To mark 10 years of 'Changing Ireland', Horace has pulled a piece of advice originally published in Issue 13 (December 2004). Enjoy 'A Dummy's Guide to Community Development Jargon'!

A Dummy's Guide to Community Development Jargon

The 'dictionary' printed here was submitted by somebody who'd rather remain anonymous. They've a senior level job and need to retain an austere image!

Social Economy Projects
Capacity Building
Equality proofing measures

Preventive Measures

Soft supports

Childcare

Creche
Bottom-up Approach

Coherence

Endorsement

Political Correctness

Socially Excluded
Married
Disadvantaged Woman
Strategic Workplan
Strategic Priority
Programme beneficiaries
End beneficiaries
Disadvantaged Area
Designated Disadvantage Area
Seminar/Conference
Integrated Services

Those that support their local social economy, i.e. go drinking together. Drinking pints on Saturday night is a "capacity building" exercise. Getting women to buy their own round is an equality proofing measure.

If you pull on a Saturday night, you may need to use preventive measures.

If you pull, you might also need soft supports, e.g. mattress etc.

Inevitable consequence of too much soft supports and inadequate preventive measures.

What they call a collision between two cars in Foxrock. Technique used on a Saturday night if the toilet seat is wet.

After "capacity building" or "measures" on Saturday night, one usually find one's coherence is gone. Hic.

What happens if the Guards catch you driving home without coherence.

Things you should never say. Examples include "Do you take a drink yourself, Guard?"

"How's the craic" to Ben Dunne;

"Is your hair a natural orange" to Pee Flynn;

Person who can't get a date on Saturday night. i.e.

Married. See above.

A plan that accounts for everything except how much work goes into doing strategic plans.

Your salary.

People who were given every possible assistance, short of actual help.

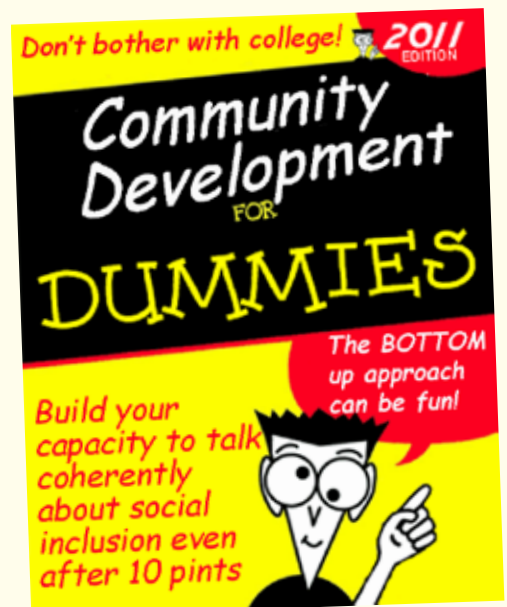
Those who actually ended up with the money.e.g. the barristers at the Tribunal of Inquiry

Constituency with no Minister

Constituency without even a Minister of State

Junket

A process of co-ordination which leads to absolute confusion.



International community development conference



An international community development conference was held in Maynooth on November 16th with speakers attending from Russia, Scotland, Australia, Holland, Liberia, Belgium and Ireland.

Around 170 people took part and the event was oversubscribed.

"It wasn't all about programmes and

structures for change," said one participant, "but about taking time to think about the need for community development today to bring about social change."

Capitalism was widely criticised for the way it creates an underclass of people across the world.

Dr Peter Westoby from Australia spoke

about "going back" to really listen to communities and their real needs.

Rappateur for the day, Ann Irwin, commented afterwards saying people were asking if now was an opportunity for community development to reassert itself.

"What struck me was the similarities the world over with community development being undervalued."

She said Ireland was seen as "one of the frontrunners internationally in community development and participants from abroad were shocked at the changes in recent years here."

Ms Irwin said community development was now structurally part of local development and that the two were not the same.

The conference was organised by the Maynooth's Department of Applied Social Studies, in association with the Community Workers Co-operative and the European Community Development Network.

The conference was held in conjunction with celebrations to mark 30 years of community work, education and training at NUI Maynooth.

Community safety: Parents found wanting

UL Sociology Dept launched a report on November 4th that, if its recommendations were implemented, could make life a lot easier for people in communities plagued by anti-social behaviour.



"It's a taboo topic, but everyone we spoke to mentioned children who were not being parented," said Dr Cliona Barnes, co-author of the 'Feeling Safe in Our Community' with Dr Martin Power. "We didn't anticipate the level of discussion about poor parenting from parents, all the residents' groups, single parents, married parents, elderly parents, estate workers, all of the officials we spoke to. And this notion that the HSE should be responsible."

"Young people below the age of criminal responsibility are the main people responsible the main source of unsafety.

Take children outside!

Play providers often say they need to strike a balance between the risks and the benefits of offering children challenging play opportunities.

An easy to cut the risks down is to stay indoors, unhealthy though it may be in other ways.

In England, they're trying to tackle this and the 'Play Safety Forum' with the backing of government departments responsible for children and education has produced a 128-page guidebook.

It's called 'Managing Risk In Play Provision: An Implementation Guide' and is free to download.

Creche and childcare managers - in community and private settings here - may enjoy reading up on England's approach while the turkey is in the oven this Christmas!

Download from: <http://bit.ly/vglhbo>



Building breakthrough communities

Tuesday November 22nd saw a networking session for community people in Ireland interested in the concept of resilience, REPORTS GEAROID FITZGIBBON.

The "Networking for Community Resilience" event was hosted by Davie Philip (Cultivate.ie) and Chris Chapman and supported by Carnegie UK Trust.

Nick Wilding said Carnegie is backing Community Resilience by supporting the sharing of best practice in England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales via its online network (www.fieryspirits.com).

As Mr Wilding pointed out, the concept of building 'Community Resilience' is backed up by on-the-ground experience and academic research into social capital.

Carnegie recently sponsored a handbook called 'Exploring Community Resilience' which shares stories and promotes greater co-operation among community activists, professionals, funders and policy makers.

Download from this link: <http://bit.ly/vtF59L>.

Meanwhile, Deborah Frieze, of the Berkana Institute did a session on the importance of games and play in community work, giving examples from Brazil and Africa of how "community games" had been used to tackle intractable community problems, as detailed in her book 'Walk Out Walk On'.

