

## The view from the bottom-up

- as hip-hop takes over

**VOLUNTEER  
POWER!**



### ALSO INSIDE:

*Stop boxing, girls!*

*Focus on Waterford.*

*Speed-dating in the community sector.*

*"I met people who had their lives changed"*

*Ex-prisoners turn their lives around in Ferrybank*

*Clonmel finds calm.... AND HORACE RETURNS!!!*

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## ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

The Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) is the main community development programme operated by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government in support of the voluntary and community sector. The aim of the LCDP is to tackle poverty and social exclusion through partnership and constructive engagement between Government and its agencies and people in disadvantaged communities. The overall funding allocation for the Programme in 2013 is some €48.707m.



## Putting People On Horseback First

### - The Other Big 'A' Debate



The public generally understands two things about local authorities. On the one hand, the elected representatives deserve more power - too much rests with officials. The second commonly held view is that local authorities are sometimes responsible for the problems they're trying to solve. They struggle to connect with 'hard-to-reach' citizens.

Recently, in Moyross, we had 30 balaclava-clad young people riding around on horseback firing stones at public buildings after dozens of horses were taken by the pound on orders from the local authority. More restrained horse-owners protested outside council offices. Neither the crude and dangerous protest nor the dignified one sought jobs or training, just social inclusion and an end to persecution. However, all four could be delivered together if those holding the reins of power put their thinking caps on.

It costs the taxpayer a small fortune to round up urban horses and after over a decade of ineffective round-ups, the council could try a different tack. A community development approach would cost less and guarantee a different outcome.

Nationally, in terms of reforming local government and introducing a more joined-up approach, "fundamental" reforms announced in October by the Government may, giving it the best view, mark the first real step in a hundred years in improving how local authorities works.

However, one reform element termed 'alignment' has been greeted by protests. Local Development Companies view it as "a takeover" of community development funds by local authorities and are currently in talks with officials over the matter.

'Alignment' marks the final destination after years of merging local projects and national programmes. It represents a core part of the Government's plan to reform and strengthen local government, make it more democratic and increase citizen participation.

However, 'alignment' also threatens to impinge on the independence of the Community Sector. Increased citizen participation, while there are plenty good examples to choose from, has yet to be delivered.

As this long process has unfolded, the State and the increasingly professionalised Community Sector has creating something of a new development dialect. Some years ago,

we had a book on equality called 'The Spirit Level' and now we have 'alignment', 'capacity building', 'cohesion' and 'one-stop shops'. The social inclusion sector has begun to sound like a builder's yard.

Easy know the man/woman in the street isn't putting the names to these things.

Meanwhile, the Local and Community Development Programme appears to be having a major impact - review findings about to be published reportedly convey an array of positives.

The Programme is delivered by Local Development Companies and to see what workers and volunteers are doing on the ground (literally as our front cover demonstrates) check out our reports from Waterford, Limerick, Tipperary and Kerry in this issue. It's a Munster-dominated edition and it's time for another province to feature in the Summer edition.

The stories are already coming in. Call us with yours today!

Your views are also welcome.

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#### Thanks To . . .

'Changing Ireland' thanks everyone involved in the production of Issue 42.

### FILE A REPORT FOR US!

If you enjoy writing, why not file your own report for us. 300-400 words is plenty (and a photo if possible). Well over a hundred community workers and volunteers have done so over the years. The chief criteria - you must be involved as a volunteer, worker or board member with a LCDP-funded project (check our website). Alternatively, tell us something novel about your community that others could learn from. Email Allen Meagher, editor, at [editor@changingireland.ie](mailto:editor@changingireland.ie) or call 061-458011.



### Disclaimer

The views expressed in this magazine are those of the author concerned. They do not, by any means, necessarily reflect the views of the editor, the editorial team, the voluntary management board of Changing Ireland Community Media Ltd, or the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.

***The most important question you've ever been asked by us!***

Dear Readers,

'Changing Ireland' would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your superb support and contributions to our publications past, present and future.

If you appreciate getting 'Changing Ireland' we ask only one thing of you - contact us if you would like to continue receiving 'Changing Ireland' by post!

To confirm your contact details, email us ([admin@changingireland.ie](mailto:admin@changingireland.ie)), phone (061-458090) or if it's easier text us today (086-8591676):

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In true Troika-era style, readers who put off the job of resubmitting their details risk being dropped from our mailing list!!

And if you would prefer to receive the magazine by email, just say the word.

As always we welcome your ideas, suggestions and stories.

Email, phone or text us today!

Yours Sincerely,

Allen Meagher

Editor

## 'Changing Ireland'

## ***'Changing Ireland' on the telly, twice!***

RTE's Winning Streak on Saturday night, April 6th, featured 'Changing Ireland', managing to showcase 13 years of work in 2.5 minutes. Here's the link: <http://bit.ly/145cX08>

In featuring us, the programme also highlighted the business acumen of LCDP beneficiary, Martin Conroy who with his wife Deborah set up the 'Exploration Dome'. The story featured on the front cover of 'Changing Ireland' recently and has been republished by others since.

'Changing Ireland' then featured on RTE's Dragon's Den the following evening when one of the aspiring entrepreneurs used our front cover cartoon to try and prise €30,000 from the dragons (Link: <http://bit.ly/YGwAHF>).

It was our muckiest cover yet and featured a cartoon version of Tina Reid shovelling horse manure into a money-making machine.

Although Tina didn't get funding from the dragons, she told us afterwards she was delighted with the positive feedback that followed her appearance. In the meantime, Tina has secured paid work once again while continuing to follow her dream.

\* The National Lottery part-funds 'Changing Ireland' through the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.





## We must highlight work happening beneath the radar

By Robert McNamara

It began with an impromptu presidential photo shoot and ended with a couple of minutes in the spotlight on one of RTE's top television programmes, Winning Streak. My time on placement from the University of Limerick at 'Changing Ireland' was eclectic in the work sense, enlightening in the personal, thought provoking from my sociological standpoint and, at times, saddening, frustrating and rewarding in equal measures.

**"The community workers and volunteers I met were brimming with optimism."**

Speaking of programmes, the one that funds this magazine's journalism faces possible shutdown – the work may be transferred to local authorities to manage – although that by no means signals the demise of 'Changing Ireland'.

Every media organisation in the world is feeling pressure of one sort or another.

Perversely, producing positive journalism was the easiest part of my time in the magazine.

Barely ten minutes drive from my home, I

had never set foot in Moyross before – despite one of the groomsmen at my forthcoming wedding originally coming from the area.

I had only driven in to collect a soccer-playing buddy for training.

I should have visited sooner.

Moyross became the launch pad for my journalism, with my three-door hatchback orbiting LDCs around the nation where I met some fascinating people.

In a time when the overall atmosphere in this country is one of tension and pessimistic expectancy, the community workers and volunteers I met were brimming with optimism.

Not blind optimism, but the kind garnered by experience.

Experience that means people get help while communities grow.

There is no doubt that community development in Ireland is underfunded, often misunderstood and is knee-deep in a quagmire of bureaucracy. It makes middle-earth look like a child's sandpit, but there are community workers out there who can compartmentalise all that to get the work done.

Furthermore, they do it under the radar, far from the media glare.

These are the people who will be most effected by "alignment". It's hard to see how their work will be absorbed by local authorities but, at the risk of sounding clichéd or twee, I saw people who had their lives changed by the work of LDCs.

I saw the launch of a highly successful

business in Clare, the birth of several careers in the motor industry in Kilkenny and entrepreneurs with innovative ideas in Dublin – ready to get Ireland working again.

I witnessed a cohesive and articulate asylum-seeker group changing their conditions for the better in Kildare and older people buoyed by exuberance and youthfulness in their drive in Limerick.

All these positive things were facilitated in some way by LDCs.

I didn't even know these companies existed until I arrived at the door of 'Changing Ireland's office.



**"I met people who had their lives changed."**

Structural change will further complicate the efforts of people who believe in changing society from the ground up, but it won't dampen their individual efforts. Communities will continue to be served and served well by volunteers and community workers who care and know their community's needs best.

Me? I leave with some valuable journalism experience, but more importantly a renewed faith in human-nature.

## Wrong to promote boxing among girls

Dear Editor,

In general, I believe your publication 'Changing Ireland' is very commendable. Many deserving people suffer unfairly from red tape and incompetence at official levels, and the local groups who challenge these abuses merit praise and, more important, material support. 'Changing Ireland' surely helps in this respect.

I have reservations arising from some contents:

1. Boxing seems implicitly to encourage physical aggressiveness as a means to and evidence of success. Other indoor competitive sports such as table tennis, gymnastics, dancing, etc, can provide the same physical activity promoting fitness, fun and health without endorsing

physical aggressiveness. To fund these sports would probably cost the State no more than boxing.

2. The very idea of encouraging girls to hit each other where it hurts seems especially wrong regardless of our Olympics boxing success. I would also ban rugby for anybody under 20 years of age, whether or not financial support is available for this 'sport' which causes so many serious injuries.

3. While you rightly criticise anti-social behaviour among idle youth with time on their hands, I have not read in 'Changing Ireland' any objection to – or even reporting on – theft via social welfare fraud. The Irish Times of March 9th reports a savings of €669 millions in 2012 from this source, and the Department of Social Protection anticipates savings of €710 millions in 2013. If you were to propose a ringfenced contribution from this source of, say, 20% annually to specific community projects, whistleblowers would probably generate even



*Our recent feature that promoted girls' boxing upset some readers.*

greater savings!

Best wishes, Chris Morris,  
Howth, Dublin13.

**Editor's note:** The headline figure of €669m relates to "savings" made from two sources – reducing fraud and eliminating errors. For instance, in reducing spending on Jobseeker's Benefit, 94% of the "savings" will come from eliminating errors, while 6% relates to fraud. In other social welfare categories, cutting out fraud accounts for over 50% of projected savings.

Your proposal has merit regardless of the figures.

# New Community Initiatives

## ***Payoff beckons for eagle-eyed volunteers*** ***- Recession-hit communities learning to fend for themselves***

Two volunteers have set up a new company in the Mid-West after spotting a niche area of the construction sector that the multi-nationals are ill-equipped to compete in.

The two directors of Community Care and Repair Ltd (CRM) could be in clover by year's end, REPORTS ALLEN MEAGHER.

The market opportunity became clear to Ursula Mullane, a graduate engineer and former Dell employee, and John Lyons, former construction worker, through delivering a volunteer handyman repair service to older people in Limerick city. They saw that many younger people have nobody to call when they want to get a simple repair job done, they can't afford to be ripped off and don't know who to trust.

Ursula, the manager, describes their novel



social enterprise as “another great example of local people bucking this recessionary trend while improving the quality of life in their community.”

“Our aim is to take the fear out of finding a handyman to do those little jobs around



your home that you may not have the time or skill to tackle yourself,” said Ursula. “We want our clients to be confident that the person coming through their door is qualified to do the job, is honest, hardworking and is not going to charge the earth.”

They'll even call around for a spot of gardening or to put the Christmas decorations away for you in the attic. No job is too small.

The business received start-up support from the PAUL Partnership and Limerick City Enterprise Board and was officially launched on March 12th.

If the concept is taken up nationwide, it could lead to the creation of hundreds of steady employment positions. There is already a growing national network of Care & Repair services (restricted in who they will assist) which could provide the natural

springboard.

CRM are also offering preventative maintenance contracts (prices on their website). Additionally, the company is setting up a trades referral service, whereby they refer clients who have jobs too big for them to reputable tradespeople.

Explaining the referral system in more detail, Ursula said they hoped to “revolutionise the way we access a network of qualified, dependable tradespeople.”

There are big national revolutions and there are small social ones at community level that history does not usually record.

Up and down the country, there are many community initiatives being launched that we would be happy to spread word about if they're truly innovative and others could follow your example. Call us!

Meanwhile, for more, see John Lyon's interview in our Volunteer Profile.

## ***Programme Review***



A “mid-term” report of the Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) by the Centre for Effective Services (CES) was due for publication as we went to press.

The report will examine how well LCDP work matches with the aims of the Coalition's Programme for Government, to “examine the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery mechanism” and to “evaluate the performance of the programme to date”.

Local Development Companies through the LCDP target supports to the most disadvantaged geographic areas and communities of interest in Ireland, with

80% of the Programme budget directed towards the provision and co-ordination of education and employment supports to these communities. The remainder focuses on access and uptake of services and promoting the engagement of disadvantaged communities with policy and practice.

Local Development Companies also manage a range of other government initiatives.

The Programme was launched in 2010 based on a design drawn up with assistance from CES.

## John Lyons, handyman and social entrepreneur

INTERVIEW BY: ALLEN MEAGHER

John Lyons from Limerick worked in construction for 20 years, felt the brunt of the decline, began volunteering and, lo and behold,

means’.”

The advert sought volunteers to help older people or people with disabilities who had house repairs to carry out, but couldn’t afford a handyman.

John hadn’t done voluntary work before this and soon found himself giving between four to six hours a week.

“My motivation was that I was at home and if I was doing nothing, I thought I’d love to go out and help.”

### ‘WHAT IF YOU’VE GOT NOBODY?’

“Both my parents are elderly and while they can call on me anytime, I thought ‘What if you don’t have somebody there to do it for you?’”

“I’ve learned more in the past months... I’ve been to more meetings, you know,” he says, at the same time throwing his eyes to heaven. “Meetings are part and parcel of it, but if you’re just used to work...”

However, from regular meetings, ideas grow.

“Launching the service in Limerick was the brainchild

of a very clever man called Mick Brown and a new company grew from it which we’ve called Community Repair and Maintenance Limited.

“As far as I know, this is the first of its kind in the country.”

The difference between the two is that one is free (but restricted to over-65s for example) while the new company offers a reliable handyman service to everyone at “affordable” rates.

### PUMPING PROFITS BACK IN FOR 3 MONTHS

“I never imagined the volunteering would

lead to paid work,” remarks John. However, his bank account won’t reflect any change for the time being.

“Because it’s just starting off, myself and the other director (Ursula) have made a joint-agreement not to take any funds out of the company, to pump all profits back in for the first three months. After that, we’ll get paid.

“We’ve completed a couple of jobs in the first month and we received a grant (from the Care & Repair Committee and the Paul Partnership) so we’ve a lot of work to do in the community centres.”

The company has a number of things going for it. Given its origins, it has a strong social ethos, the two employees have a track record around the city, and the company can allay the fears of anyone feeling vulnerable and reluctant to let strangers into their home.

### ‘DO WE HAVE TO BE PC?’

“The people we go to might be on their own, but the fact that there’s a woman who can accompany me should help them feel more comfortable. Ursula has great DIY skills herself,” he says.

The company would like to see its model copied around the country and people are welcome to call them to find out more.

Meanwhile, Mick who got the ball rolling in Limerick has moved on and is now a project worker with COPE in Galway.

Oddly, given the gender range within the company, they still happily call it an “affordable handyman service”.

“Oh, we have to be PC, do we? Ursula doesn’t mind. Just make sure you say it’s affordable and it’s for everyone,” replies John.

\* John has been supported in his voluntary work and in social enterprise development by the PAUL Partnership, through funding provided under the LCDP, and through Limerick City Enterprise Board.

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

T: 061-513645. M: 083-1309895.

Address: Our Lady of Lourdes Community Centre, Childers Road, Limerick City.



*“I never imagined the volunteering would lead to paid work.”*

18 months later he’s looking at being paid once more for construction related work.

Along the way, he and colleague Ursula Mullane have become social entrepreneurs, though he doesn’t accord himself any fancy titles.

“I’m just the handyman,” he says, modestly. “I saw an advert in the paper looking for volunteers to help the elderly and I said, ‘Yeah, by all



## ***We're far from doomed when older people start organising*** *By Allen Meagher*

This country might recover its common sense if older people had more of a say, Mayor of Limerick Cllr Gerry McLoughlin maintains. He was speaking at the launch in February of a 'Seniors Forum' for the county.

"If we're to get a bit of common sense going in this country, older people should have a strong voice," he said.

Currently, around 12% of the population is aged 65 or over and this is projected to rise to 15% over the next decade.

A Galway professor last year called for the creation of "elder councils" to tap that expertise for the benefit of communities. Prof. Eamon O'Shea believes that older people are "well capable" of sustaining their communities after young people emigrate and that it was "a total misconception to assume that communities are doomed in these cases (because) older people have so much to offer."

Sharing that vision, Limerick Seniors Forum brought together citizens from over 20 local groups representing older people so they can speak with a collective voice on issues such as cutbacks to services, policing concerns, dropping incomes and new taxes

on property and so on. The agenda is open to the public to shape.

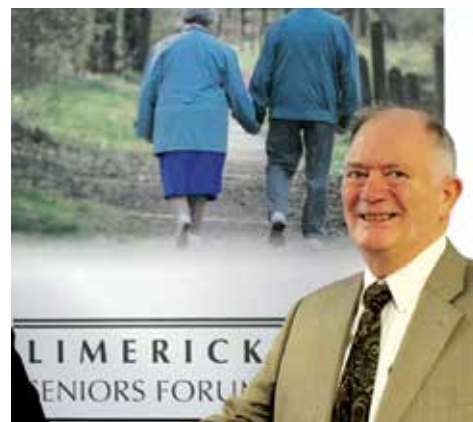
The Forum has scheduled eight meetings to take place this year and fits in with a national campaign by Older & Bolder to ensure older people's voices are heard on both local and national stages.

Forum chairperson Larry Duggan said, "Older people have been affected by savage cuts... But remember that 90% of elderly people vote. If we use that power, united, we can get something from the Government."

John Buttery, social programmes co-ordinator with PAUL Partnership - which supports the initiative - said, "This is just the beginning and it's about much more than just about improving services, it's about articulating older people's right to participate in civic life."

Patricia Conboy, national director of Older and Bolder, said the Forum should "aim to influence national policy."

Note: Prof. O'Shea based his argument on a cross-border study titled 'Social Exclusion and Aging in Diverse Rural Communities' which was launched by NUI Galway in 2012.



*Limerick Seniors Forum chairperson  
Larry Duggan.*

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

## ***Thank you Austin, Breda, LIT Tipp and contributors nationwide!***

A great big thank you to everyone who responded to our volunteer team during a recent phone blitz to see what readers make of the magazine. Those who made a financial contribution know who you are and we are deeply grateful.

We are also grateful to the fabulous staff and students of Social and Community Studies in LIT Tipperary who engaged in a major project to advise us on how to improve our marketing within third level institutions nationwide. The students made formal presentations at a ceremony attended by 'Changing Ireland' chairperson Gearoid Fitzgibbon and editor Allen Meagher. 'Changing Ireland' also hosted the students on a visit to Moyross.

Separately, we are very grateful to Breda Lymer who served on Changing Ireland Community Media Ltd's voluntary board of management for over two years.

And finally, 'Changing Ireland' has re-designed its masthead with voluntary support from artist and community worker Austin Creaven for which we are most grateful.



*Lecturer Paul Keating (right) and LIT Tipperary students pay close attention during a talk at Corpus Christi National School, Moyross, recently.*



## LECTURE: Resist, Reclaim or Resign!



The LCDP-funded Cumann Na Daoine project in Youghal, Co. Cork, is hosting a lecture by author and academic Mae Shaw of the University of Edinburgh, on June 7th.

The public talk is tentatively titled 'The future of Community Development - Resisting,

Reclaiming or Resigning!'

Mae has published widely on the challenges, risks and rewards of community work, community education, and democratic and civic engagement and the invite came from an emerging 'Community Development Critical Network' which brings together community workers from Munster and south Leinster.

Bookings and enquiries to Cumann Na Daoine. T: 024-91900. E: [evelyn@youghalcldp.com](mailto:evelyn@youghalcldp.com)

*Mae Shaw is one of the editors of The Community Development Reader*

## WESTMEATH: Gardeners become TV stars

Students on a gardening course in Westmeath became overnight television stars when they featured in a broadcast of Dermot O'Neill's 'Dermot's Secret Garden' on RTE.

The show featured students involved in Westmeath Community Development's Horticulture Course and was broadcast on Valentine's Day.

For two years Dermot worked with the students on a garden project in Multryfarnham and to restore a walled garden.

Horticulture tutor, John Smyth, said it had been "a unique experience" and the students had "played their part" in bringing Dermot's dream to life.

Based in Belvedere House and Gardens, the students are participating in a FETAC level 5 course in horticulture under supervision from John and co-ordinator, Majella Maher.

The course was established in 2009 and has been oversubscribed every



year and is recognised as a progression path to further education. Many former students are now studying for a horticulture degree course in Blanchardstown IT.

The course is supported through the LCDP in association with FAS, the TUS programme and Westmeath County Council.

Thanks to project co-ordinator Majella Maher for bringing this story to our attention.

## ATHLONE:

### 45 trained to install meters

The introduction of water charges will shortly provide work opportunities installing and maintaining meters.

With this in mind, Westmeath Community Development (WCD) recently hired a company to deliver an accredited training programme for 45 people in Athlone and Mullingar.

A specially equipped vehicle was used and the trainees learned how to install, repair and maintain meters. Trainees have now completed practical and written examinations.

The course participants were chosen from "clients" of WCD's employment mediation services and from the TUS programme.

Accreditation, an essential requirement for employment in



this field, was provided through the European Registration Scheme for Personnel Competence.

The project was supported by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government under the Local & Community Development Programme.

## DUBLIN & KERRY:

### 3 suicide prevention ideas

1. The South Dublin County Partnership Ltd. has initiated an interagency-led pilot programme to respond to the issue of suicide among men.

The Men-at-Risk to Suicide Programme aims to support men affected by unemployment and/or the recession and to link them to the appropriate services.

2. Meanwhile, in Kerry, a new HSE booklet on promoting positive mental health is being distributed to 11,000 young people. 'THINK' was written by the HSE's Children's Services Committee and provides information for young people and their parents on issues such as depression, bullying, sexuality and suicide.

3. Also, students from Tralee Institute of Technology have produced a highly-insightful, anti-suicide informational video (available on Youtube) for young people.

To learn of an unique approach North East Kerry Development is taking to promote positive mental health and well-being, read our special report on page 22.

# Introduction

## ***Community reps negotiate with Government officials***

***- Talks continue over small but significant detail of reform plans***

**BY ALLEN MEAGHER**

Talks are continuing between Government officials and representatives from the Irish Local Development Network (ILDN) the representative body for the country's Local Development Companies (LDCs).

All 50 companies are involved in delivering the €48.7m Local and Community Development Programme, while 35 of them (in rural areas) deliver the substantially bigger part-EU-funded LEADER programme.

The discussions are taking place following sign-off by the Government last October on reforms outlined in 'Putting People First' which seeks "to place local government at the heart of local economic, social and community development."

Agreement has been reached on eight out of nine reforms, but LDCs remain in talks with officials over a contentious "alignment" proposal that would see new Socio-Economic Committees (SECs) take the lead role in local and community development.

Government officials point out that local authorities are being reformed in tandem with the planned changes and argue that alignment marks an advance in terms of democratisation.

LDCs view it as "a takeover" and believe it is a step too far.

The talks take place in the context of the Final Alignment Report's statement that, "The approach and ethos of the local development companies, based on community involvement, and interventions tailored to address particular local needs, are fundamental elements of the local development model in Ireland. Considerable care should be taken to maintain the integrity of this model."

The report proposes that we should "build upon the strengths and experiences of both the local government and local development systems" while acknowledging that neither approach is perfect: "There is considerable variation in approach, skills and standards of service delivery across both local authorities and local development companies."

Those involved in the "alignment" negotiations are the ILDN, Pobal, the City and County Managers Association and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.

The Minister wants stakeholders to look at the wide reform picture being presenting, to

look at the long-term outcomes promised, and he pointed out that all other EU countries "have a structure in place which is a partnership between local government and the community."

Said Minister Hogan: "Local communities will continue to be involved in a bottom-up approach to local development, in conjunction with local authorities. The local development model is to be retained and Local Development Companies will continue to have a delivery role."

The wider local government reforms promise to strengthen local democracy, "lessen duplication" and save money. The number of councillors will be reduced, many smaller councils will be merged or replaced as new municipal bodies are set up (outside Dublin only) and the reformed local authorities promise greater citizen participation.

Government officials point out that the EU bodies have also been critical of elements of Ireland's current approach to local development and that OECD support can be cited to support the case for reform.

## ***Opponents***

Opponents object to "a takeover" by local authorities, saying if anything alignment will reduce local democracy, erode community-led local development, destroy the autonomy of LDCs and is contrary to best practice internationally.

"None of us should expect autonomy," Minister Hogan told the Dail.

The ILDN cites support from Brussels. As 150 TDs and Senators who attended an ILDN briefing were told in January, the EU "strongly endorses Ireland's Community-Led Local Development approach" as it currently exists.

Objections have been raised by academics, community workers, some local authorities themselves and members of the public:

Hundreds of people have attended public protest meetings. In Mayo, for example, over 500 people attending a meeting in Castlebar and 500 more people attended a similar protest in Westport.

A group of 21 academics signed a letter

of protest and County Councils in Leitrim and Clare passed motions voicing their opposition (while councils in Kerry and Wexford refused to back similar motions).

The Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers' Association says it "does not believe that LEADER should be subsumed into the local authority system" while the Irish Farmers Association is also opposed.

The Community Workers' Co-operative (CWC) welcomed local government reform, but stressed that the Community Sector had to remain independent and echoed concerns shared by other commentators that too much control still rests with city/county managers.

It was proposed at a conference held in Maynooth in November that the CWC should have a seat on the Alignment Working Group but this did not come to pass.

Meanwhile, the ILDN is engaged with the group. The network's three representatives are Shay Riordan, Anna Lee, and Michael

Ludlow, from Limerick, Dublin and Meath respectively. Ten local authority areas have been chosen to run pilot Socio-Economic Committees, on agreement being reached.

"We're not pushing an open door on this but I believe there is room for a good compromise outcome," commented Dóirín Graham, CEO of Clare Local Development Company. "It's still all to play for and we can still get a good outcome in terms of our autonomy."

Separately, the ILDN on behalf of its members has proposed that they partner with the Government in applying for the next round of European Structural and Investment Funds, which includes LEADER, for 2014-2020.



## *The role and functions of Socio-Economic Committees*

**Representation on the Socio-Economic Committees (SEC) and their terms of reference are currently the subject of discussion. Currently, this is what is envisaged.**

A Socio-Economic Committee (SEC) will be established in each city and county council area for planning and oversight of all local and community development programmes.

SECs will have responsibility for developing a five-year City and County Local and Community plan, encompassing all state-funded local and community development interventions.

A national policy on local and community development will be launched in advance of the 2014 local elections.

It is intended that the SEC will be established in such a way that it will be eligible to be the structure through which LEADER is delivered in accordance with EU requirements.

It is the view of the Alignment Steering Group that, to be effective, the SEC should comprise no more than 15 members, representing the local authority, local and community interests and appropriate State agencies.

The local authority will provide executive support for the SEC, led by the County Manager/Director of Community and Enterprise. Decisions regarding the allocation of funding will rest with the SEC, while administrative functions, including payment of funds, performance monitoring, auditing

and reporting will be undertaken by the county/city council.

**The above points are taken from 'A Guide to Putting People First' and from a report written by Ian Dempsey, CEO of West Cork Development Partnership, using extracts from the 'Final Report of the Local Government/ Local Development Alignment Steering Group'.**

**Note: The Final Alignment Report acknowledged the European Court of Auditors 2010 report that among other things recommended limiting local authority involvement so that they do not dominate.**

**More information: All of these reports are available online.**

## *Media advisory*

'Changing Ireland' is an independent magazine established in 2001 and produced in Moyross, Limerick, by Changing Ireland Community Media Ltd.

The magazine has its own voluntary management board, editor and independent editorial board.

The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, with whom the company has a contract to promote the profile and work of the Local and

Community Development Programme, has a seat alongside others on the magazine's editorial board.

The magazine's establishment and continued support is a tribute to Government's recognition of the importance of the bottom-up approach to local and community development and to giving marginalised communities a voice. The journalism focuses on the thousands of positives from LCDP and related work while retaining a critical edge. It is written in a style designed to

appeal to a wide audience.

'Changing Ireland' is not "the Department's in-house magazine" as a national newspaper once incorrectly called it.

The disclaimer on page 2 elaborates further.



## *Unions supporting half-a-million unemployed - 25 support centres set up since 1985*

While Trade Unions are commonly seen to be protecting the interests of people at work, a network of 25 "Centres for the Unemployed" operates quietly across the island of Ireland.

They offering confidential support to over half a million people, independent of state agencies.

The centres were first established in 1985 by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and FÁS as a response to mass unemployment. In 1987 Social Welfare schemes and labour activation courses offered by FAS were promoted through the centres, along with education services and recreational facilities.

Each Centre is a company limited by guarantee which is managed by a fulltime co-ordinator and a voluntary board made up of local trades council, trade union and community representatives.

The network is supported by ICTU head office staff and is funded from a variety of sources including FAS Community Services and FAS Services to Business.

The centres are open to all members of the public and assist unemployed people and soon to be unemployed workers to change careers, prepare CVs, retrain, search for jobs, consider enterprise opportunities. They also inform citizens of their welfare, employment and redundancy entitlements.

Over the years these have assisted tens of thousands of people in their dealings with the social welfare system and other state bodies. The Centres also link with Local Development Companies and other community organisations.

With unemployment at 14% as of March 2013 such employment-support initiatives are invaluable.

The list of centres is as follows: Belfast; Clare; Letterkenny; Dublin 12 Congress Centre, The Fingal Centre; Galway; Caherciveen; Tralee, Killarney; Athy, Leixlip, Newbridge; Kilkenny; Leitrim; Limerick; Longford; Drogheda; Dundalk; Ballina, Castlebar; Westmeath, Mullingar; Wicklow.



*Naas is among 25 areas with Centres for the Unemployed.*

**Full contact details for each centre are available at: [www.ictu.ie](http://www.ictu.ie)**

## Minister Hogan on 'Putting People First'

Late last year, Taoiseach Enda Kenny and Minister Phil Hogan launched 'Putting People First' describing it as "one of the most radical, ambitious and far-reaching governance reform plans ever put forward by an Irish Government."

Minister Hogan said: "The reforms put a strong emphasis on accountability as the bedrock of a properly functioning system of local democracy, providing for better engagement with citizens."

"I am committed to building stronger, more cohesive local government, giving it a greater capacity not only to address the challenges we face, but also to promote local community, social and economic development, and collectively to maximise the strengths of our country as a place in which to live, to invest and to work."

"At a critical time for our country, local government has a crucial role to play in Ireland's national recovery. The action programme empowers local government in an entirely new way, particularly in relation to economic development, and most importantly, sustaining and creating jobs."

"This programme affirms the need for the system to embrace change, share the burden, modernise, adapt to new financial circumstances and deliver even better services with scarce resources," he said.

**Extracts from 'A Guide to Putting People First':**



*Minister Hogan & Taoiseach Enda Kenny*

The emphasis in this action programme is to enable local government to deliver more to the community it serves. Between local government, local representatives and the communities they serve.

Local government will lead economic, social and community development locally. It will be the main vehicle of governance and public service at local level, deliver efficient and good value services, and represent citizens and communities, as effectively and accountably as possible.

The objective of Putting People First is to ensure that local government is better placed to enhance the wellbeing and quality of life of citizens and local communities, while delivering

maximum value for money.

Decisions will be made as close to the people they affect as possible.

More power will be devolved to local level, closest to the people. Elected members will perform a substantial range of "reserved" functions at municipal district level. (A number of functions are legally "reserved" for elected councillors. The remaining functions are the city/county manager's responsibility).

There is an unprecedented appetite for change and specifically for improved service to and contact with, the customer.

While the reform programme will yield significant savings on full implementation of up to €420 million perhaps, of even greater significance are the non-financial benefits that will accrue in the form of more effective service delivery, better quality local representation and closer engagement between communities and authorities. This will represent the long-term success of the reforms envisaged in Putting People First.

Mechanisms to promote citizen engagement with local government will be considered including participative democracy arrangements. (The new Municipal District Councils may become the incubators for tentative experiments in participatory democracy at local government level).

## Alignment of Local Government and Local Development

The Programme for Government committed to reviewing the delivery of services at local level in order to improve service delivery from the point of view of the citizen. It has committed to reducing the duplication of services while ensuring greater democratic accountability in decision-making at a local level.

One initiative through which this will be achieved is the alignment of local government and local development sectors in a way that builds on the strengths of both sectors. A high level Alignment Steering Group was established in September 2011 by Minister Phil Hogan to make recommendations on improving alignment between the sectors.

The Group's final report (including the text of an interim report) was approved for implementation by Government last October.

Alignment forms part of the broader Local Government reform proposals as laid out in 'Putting People First – An Action Programme for Effective Local Government'. The alignment of local government and local development will be pursued on a phased basis over the period 2012-2014, in a way that will secure optimum value from available resources and enhance service delivery for local communities.

The alignment report recognised "the key strengths of local development companies, including their reach into their communities,

their proven track record of leading social inclusion and local and community development initiatives, and their significant local knowledge and expertise in service planning and delivery."

It noted: "The approach and ethos of the local development companies, based on community involvement, and interventions tailored to address particular local needs, are fundamental elements of the local development model in Ireland. Considerable care should be taken to maintain the integrity of this model."

Further information including the full reports are available on the Department's website: [www.environ.ie](http://www.environ.ie)

## Alignment - For and Against

**IN FAVOUR:** "This document represents a fundamental re-imagining of the system and it sees local government leading economic, social and community development... Unlike many previous reform documents, this Programme sets out firm decisions by Government rather than proposals for discussion."

**- Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Phil Hogan.**

**OPPOSED:** "While we recognise the need for stronger and more accountable local government, we caution against any attempt to subsume community-led local development bodies into local authorities."

**- 21 academics writing in the Irish Times.**

**IN FAVOUR:** "It is evident that the existing arrangements for local development are administratively burdensome and do not lend

themselves to joined-up, integrated service delivery, having evolved from a disjointed national approach to local service delivery. Central government, by establishing multiple structures for service delivery at local level has, to a large extent, by-passed local government and undermined the democratic process at local level."



**- Final Report of the Local Government/Local Development Alignment Steering Group.**

**OPPOSED:** "They've already torn the bottom out of it."

**- CEO of a local development company who requested anonymity.**

**IN FAVOUR:** "The contention that 2,000 jobs will be lost and that 20 years of experience in the planning and delivery of local development programmes will be lost is quite simply untrue."

**- Aine Collins, Fine Gael TD**

**OPPOSED:** "They need to build it from the ground up. Generally, top-down policies haven't worked for communities and are too weak."

**- Maria Power, community consultant based in Youghal, Co. Cork.**



# ALIGNMENT

## FOCUS, HOPE, SYNERGY & RISKS

"The introduction, through a new committee (Socio-Economic Committee), of a Local and Community Plan will give added focus to mainstreaming local, community and rural development issues into local government services.

"More interestingly is that this local effort will be underpinned by a national policy framework which will be overseen by an inter-departmental committee, providing, hopefully, a similar level of integration and policy alignment at the national level.

"Coming up with workable models to do so is going to be a major challenge, but given

the pressures on communities across the State, no one will be thanked if local, rural and community development are disrupted, no matter the benefits of underpinning local democracy.

"While integration with local authority support services will bring the potential for greater resource synergy at local level, there is a risk that the positive experiences of the local development companies might be lost...

"Sometimes being the facilitator might be more strategically appropriate than being actually responsible for the delivery of the immediate service."



- Extract from 'Alignment of Local Government and Local Development', by Seán O'Riordan and Associates, November 15, 2012.

## DIFFERENT TIMES REQUIRE DIFFERENT RESPONSES



"In 'Putting People First', Minister Hogan has set out a very ambitious agenda for local government and local economic development

in Ireland. It has the potential to recalibrate local government and local democracy.

"The reforms seem focused on putting local economic development very much at the heart of the recovery. That seems to be building on a couple of decades of dedicated work at the local level through the Local Development Companies, through the partnership approach, but different times require different responses.

"What the reforms are setting out is the opportunity for the Local Development Companies, or local government, the different

partnership groups, business, trade unions, to begin to work together in a different way, a more collaborative way that is very much focused around jobs and an inclusive growth agenda."

- Debra Mountford, a senior policy analyst with OECD LEED, the worldwide network of local development practitioners. She spoke at a conference titled 'Implementing Change – A new Local Agenda for Jobs and Growth' organised in co-operation with the EU Presidency, the Irish Government and Pobal in March.

## TREMENDOUS POTENTIAL

"Civil society and voluntary organisations have been vibrant in Ireland and have filled service provision and development gaps caused by the absence of a municipal tier of government; yet central government is attempting to subjugate the local development sector to excessive administrative controls and to dismantle collaborative governance.

Yes, there is tremendous potential for local government reform and renewal, the signposts are in place - we just need to follow them."

- Dr Brendan O'Keeffe of Mary I College, UL, in his report 'Local Government in Times of Austerity – Reflections on Ireland', published in 2012.



## PUTTING IN PLACE JOBS THAT LAST



"Spotting key priorities for future development is not easy when there are a plethora of local actors working on different strategies and in different partnerships at the local level.

"At a time when public budgets are becoming increasingly tight such fragmentation is no longer acceptable. As governments reduce spending in order to pay off their deficits it will be important to make public policy more efficient, through reducing duplication and better aligning activities locally.

"Many lessons exist from different OECD countries on how to make local governance more effective, and now is a good time to put these into practice. LEED research shows that it is often following a crisis that people really come together and work for a common future."

- From 'Putting in Place Jobs that Last - A Guide to Rebuilding Quality Employment at Local Level', by Francesca Froy and Sylvain Giguère, published in OECD LEED Working Papers, 2010/13.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5km7jf7qtk9p-en>

## AGENDA FOR SURVIVAL

"The voice of many community organisations has grown cautious. Funding relationships have to be sustained and the state is the core funder for much of the sector. So protest remains unvoiced in the public arena, dissent is diminished and advocacy is limited within careful boundaries. An agenda for survival has taken over."

- Niall Crowley in his paper 'Lost in Austerity: Rethinking the Community Sector', published by the Third Sector Research Centre in June 2012.



## DECISION-MAKING POWER

"The local action groups should be made up of representatives of local public and private socio-economic interests, such as entrepreneurs and their associations, local authorities, neighbourhood or rural associations, groups of citizens (such as minorities, senior citizens, women/men, youth, entrepreneurs, etc.), community and voluntary organisations, etc. Civil society and private sector partners should have at least 50% of the decision-making power and no single interest group should have more than 49% of the votes.

- From an EU factsheet on 'Cohesion Policy 2014-2020'.

## Introduction: Residents band together

Residents of Cooleen's Close in Clonmel town, Co. Tipperary, have banded together and forged a new community pride in the area by retaking waste ground, entering organic gardening and opening the door to outside support.

Upon getting organised, the residents realised there were many more agencies and supports available to them than they had been aware of.

The authors of this article – staff with South Tipperary Development Company – say the company is “proud” to have supported the model of engagement they outline below and predict it will have “far-reaching and long-term positive impacts for individuals and the community as a whole” in Cooleen's Close.

## How Cooleen's Close forged a new community pride

BY HILARY DILWORTH  
AND PHIL SHANAHAN \*

The Local and Community Development Programme is the conduit for engagement between communities and local services, often acting as the architect that facilitates and enables communities to achieve their objectives and goals. A strong example of this in action in South Tipperary is the Cooleen's Close Field Project, supported through the LCDP by South Tipperary Development Company (STDC).

Cooleen's Close is one of the RAPID estates in Clonmel. The estate experiences a number of systemic problems, including: a lack of engagement in community structures; a lack of community and youth facilities; high levels of anti-social behaviour; high unemployment; and low education and skills levels with little engagement by the community in training and education opportunities.

### HAD BECOME DESPONDENT

The initial engagement between Cooleen's residents and LCDP staff in June last year focused on an overgrown and neglected field at the back of the houses that had become a site for anti-social behaviour. The residents had become despondent and disillusioned with what they felt was indifference to this issue by key service providers.

Nevertheless, through support by the STDC and people on placement through the Tús Programme, the whole field was



transformed into a space that included a community allotment, memorial garden, skittles area and a community cabin which will act as a centre for community activities.

In achieving this transformation, the community was facilitated to engage and work with key statutory and community services including Clonmel Borough Council, RAPID, the HSE, Clonmel Community Based Drugs Initiative, Tidy Towns, South Tipperary VEC and the Department of Social Protection.

While the project has seen great mobilisation by the community, it has also developed confidence levels to the extent that the possibilities are now limitless for this community. They are now engaged fully with the services that will enable them to further their plans for their estate.

### LEARNING ABOUT ONE FROM ANOTHER

For example, going back and forth to meetings, Mary Lawlor, a resident of Cooleen's Close, found “there there is a lot more out there” in terms of agencies and organisations willing and able to lend support.

“We are learning because one agency (gives) us information on another agency

that we didn't know about and then we go talk to them.”

Agencies and services that engaged with the community through this project have reported that engagement levels have notably increased between them and this community, collectively and individually:

“We've had contact from other Cooleen's Close residents since the project started,” remarked an official from the Department of Social Protection. “It gave them confidence to come along and re-engage with us more than they have done previously.”

“They have a better relationship now with the corporation in Clonmel and with other agencies,” said Richard Wood, Tús Team Leader.

While the focus of the Cooleen's Project was on community development, the broad outcomes and achievements are reflected across the four Programme Goals of the LCDP.

• **Authors:** Hilary Dilworth is LCDP Development Worker and Phil Shanahan is LCDP Manager with STDC. Student, Claire Turner, while on placement with the company, compiled a case-study on Cooleen's Close that helped form the basis for the above article.





## Speed dating for community groups



*L-R: Susan Power, Waterford City Childcare Committee; Eilíshe O'Keeffe, Brothers of Charity; John McDonald, Waterford Disability Network; Fiona Lewis, South East Simon; Paul Murphy, Waterford Warmer Homes.*

Might a replacement have been found for C&V sector "open days" held at local level where every organisation has a stall in a hall?

### **ROBERT McNAMARA REPORTS:**

Waterford Area Partnership (WAP) has come up with a great way for community groups to make contact and learn more about each other in order to better serve the community.

Last May, WAP hosted 'Making the Link' a speed-dating event for community groups. Each group's representative had two minutes to woo each 'date' from another community organisation.

The café style networking event took place in the Edmund Rice Heritage Centre, Barrack

St in Waterford City and was a huge success according to Margaret Mulligan LCDP Coordinator at WAP.

"It allowed each participant to meet representatives from all the other organisations and gave them the opportunity to share information on the work they do. They were also able to exchange ideas and share contact details," she said.

"Many of the participants were really amazed at the number of groups active in the city and the wide range of work that they do. They were delighted to meet people from other organisations who would be able to offer valuable support in the future," Margaret

added.

Anna Walsh from the Money Advice and Budgeting Service said, "It was great to be able to put faces to the names that I have been dealing with over the phone, the event was very worthwhile".

The event was open to community and voluntary groups and the main statutory agencies.

"The dramatic increase in demand for assistance, information and support from state services is placing enormous pressure on their frontline staff. This can be very frustrating and time-consuming. Identifying the right person or section in an organisation can help reduce delays and get accurate information quicker. Community groups found the event to be of real benefit in helping to build contacts in the statutory sector," said Jack Walsh of WAP.

WAP have also published a "Guide to Services" leaflet for the Waterford area which includes everything from social welfare to recreational facility contact details. This is in addition to the website [www.waterfordlife.ie](http://www.waterfordlife.ie), which can be used to access information about services in the city.

Note: WAP's speed-dating style events were held in pursuit of LCDP Goal 1 which seeks to "promote awareness, knowledge and uptake of a wide range of statutory, voluntary and community services."

## Irish hormone therapy for transgender people



*Ann Keane, TransParenCI, Tracy Morrissey and Vanessa Lacey of TranSE, Dr Jamison Green, transgender health expert, and UK researchers Bernard Reed and Terry Reed.*

The focus of this year's Transgender South-East Conference, attended by 140 people and supported through funding from Waterford Area Partnership (WAP), was 'Transgender Healthcare'. Held on February 22nd, it aimed to de-mystify the healthcare needs of transgender people and their families.

### **REPORTS ROBERT McNAMARA.**

Participants heard that 32% of health and

social care workers had provided treatment to a transgender person, but only 10 per cent of them had any training in the issues involved.\*

"This year we targeted transgender healthcare, focusing on best practice worldwide to facilitate a learning process for service providers that never existed before in Ireland," said organiser Vanessa Lacey of Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI).

Guest speaker Dr Jamison Green of the World Professional Association of Transgender Health talked of international best practice.

Among other guest speakers was Dr. Thomas Ahern of St Colmcille's Hospital, Loughlinstown, who spoke about endocrinology and hormone therapy for transgender people in Ireland.

The day was facilitated by a partnership between WAP, the HSE, TENI and TRANSE, a community group supporting transgender people in the South East.

The chairperson of the Oireachtas Committee for Health and Children, Jerry Buttimer, TD, opened the conference.

Should workers in other communities have any queries, contact WAP directly. T: 051-841740. E: [info@wap.ie](mailto:info@wap.ie) W: [www.wap.ie](http://www.wap.ie)

\*The HSE Transgender Health Advisory Group carried out a survey in 2012 among health and social care workers and 41% of respondents described their knowledge of transgender health issues as poor or non-existent.

## Former prisoners turning their lives around in Ferrybank

BY ROBERT MCNAMARA

The place is bustling as 'Changing Ireland' comes through the door unannounced and seeking a story. We immediately get the impression that there are plenty here.

The warm vibe is instantly striking and we are greeted heartily by everyone who notices our arrival - a constant theme of our recent visits to LDC supported projects.

There's an air of confidence about the place and while everyone is busy, there's a distinct lack of stress and a steely concentration about the men carrying out the painting, woodwork and other jobs around the place.

Their craft goods are lined up proudly on the worktops and there's a fair amount of jesting going on - always a sign of a happy workplace.

Welcome to the U-Casadh - which means 'u-turn' - a project in Ferrybank on the fringes of Waterford city, along the border with County Kilkenny. Here, former prisoners over the age of 24 are given the opportunity to build confidence, self-esteem and receive training with the ultimate goal of getting a job.

To facilitate this, the men take part in courses and make craft goods at U-Casadh's base to sell locally. They also have a gym to work out in.

### EXUDING POSITIVE ATTITUDE

Two of these men, Kevin Colfer (40), of Lisduggan, and Kenny Murphy (31), of Newport Square, are at the opposite ends of the spectrum at U-Casadh in terms of the time they've spent here, yet both exude the same positive attitude and determination to work.

Kevin has been here for four years and his achievements can be measured not only in the certificates he has received but also in his everyday life.

"Being here at U-Casadh means I'm in a routine. Boredom is a big problem with a lot of lads. I used to have a really bad habit of being up all night and staying in bed all day.

"Nowadays I'm up at eight, I'm here for nine and I work until three or four in the day. There is always something to do here like labouring or craft work. It really keeps



*"I used to (be) up all night and stay in bed all day. Nowadays I'm up at eight."*

*Kevin Colfer, participant*

me ticking over. It gives me an ego-boost because I love working with my hands and seeing the things that I do and make.

"I want to pass onto the lads coming through what I've learned."

One of the participants who will benefit from Kevin's experience is Kenny who is new to U-Casadh.

"There's good banter here, everyone gets on. People don't look down their noses at you. They know you've had problems but they get on with you anyway."

### 'I'VE BEEN CLEAN FOR A YEAR'

"It gives me the motivation to get out of

bed and I've been clean for a year. It's helped me with my problems with drink and drugs and it's given me a few ideas about what I want to do with my life.

"They've also helped me with housing and social welfare. I've gotten four certs in the eight months which is more than I've got in the last 20 years."

Katherine Peacock is operations coordinator at U-Casadh: "There was a need to engage with offenders over the age of 24 in the area. The idea is that the lads who have been here a long time will teach others to do what they've done. We want them to take ownership of every aspect of the business from finding their market to



# Focus On Waterford

selling the goods.

"We try to capture what the men want to do with their lives and see how we can help them to do that."

U-Casadh offers a three-tiered programme. Firstly, it addresses ex-prisoners' basic needs upon release such as applications for medical cards, housing and social welfare.

Secondly, it provides training and participants engage in courses as cooking, life-skills, behavioural skills, anger management, addiction, crime awareness and literacy programmes.

The third component is to support the participants to find long-term employment outside the project or set up social enterprises within.

## 'WE'RE OUT ON OUR OWN'

Waterford Area Partnership (WAP) designed the initial project structure for U-Casadh and hired the first worker, Stephen Plunkett, now the project's CEO. In 2011, U-Casadh's success was acknowledged on a nationwide scale when the project won a prestigious Arthur Guinness Fund

Award. The folks at Guinness were so impressed with the participants' craftwork that they gave the contract for producing their national awards to U-Casadh. The participants also sold their wares at Waterford's 'Winterval' festival to much success and acclaim.

"Waterford Area Partnership set this up, they were instrumental, they've gotten it to this point. We are now out on our own and we are registering as a charity," says Katherine.

"We are trying to expand it into a long-term business and engage people long term."

Kevin is currently doing a FETAC course on how to run a business to complement his FETAC level 6 train-the-trainer, his lorry licence, his safe pass and manual-handling cert.

Kenny regularly uses the skills he has garnered from a FETAC level 5 home maintenance and cooking course and is hoping to get on a CE scheme which would keep him at U-Casadh for another two years. He also keeps fit with regular visits to U-Casadh's gym for boxing training.

To this day, through LCDP funding, WAP continues to work in partnership with U-Casadh.

## U-CASADH: BACKGROUND INFO

The project was set-up by WAP in 2008. The Stephen's Green Trust provided funding for the first three years, with support also forthcoming from the Probation Service, Department of Social Protection, Waterford Institute of Technology and County Kilkenny Leader Partnership (CKLP). The Brothers of Charity supply the premises on a long-term lease.

Today, U-Casadh claims to be the "leading ex-prisoner, re-integration programme in the South East". Community workers, students and volunteers interested in an in-depth view of the project's background and aims should check out: [www.action-project.com/?page\\_id=352](http://www.action-project.com/?page_id=352) Meanwhile, U-Casadh's CEO Stephen Plunkett can be contacted on: 086 7908741. E: [stephen@ucasadh.ie](mailto:stephen@ucasadh.ie). W: <http://www.ucasadh.ie/>

## A whirlwind tour of Waterford

By Robert McNamara

The sun gleamed pink on the new River Suir Bridge as 'Changing Ireland' scuttled along on our journey towards Ireland's oldest city.

Not even a debate with the toll lady about her aversion to accepting coppers as legal tender could sully that sight.

On arrival, I found that the Waterford Area Partnership (WAP) was ingrained in my guide Jack Walsh's fibre and, everywhere we went, people knew him and greeted him fondly.

"Hi Jack", "Well Jack", "Good man Jack".

Jack is responsible for monitoring, evaluation and research at the local development company and hence he is somewhat involved in all their projects. He's also a former mayor of Waterford and a local councillor so he knows the city's needs very well.

Jack took us around various projects in the city and even though we arrived unannounced, we were treated well and offered tea and a chat without hesitation – not always the reception you get when you're with a politician.

After stopping off at the Partnership's office on the outskirts of the city, where I met the CEO Joe Stokes and the LCDP team, we

headed to Ferrybank on the northern bank of the River Suir.

Achievement breeds confidence and there at the U-Casadh project, which was set up by WAP, I was welcomed by ex-prisoners who know this to be true. Kenny Murphy and Kevin Colfer both told me that the project gives them the motivation to get out of bed in the morning – no better endorsement for community development work.

We met Ian Lennon and his colleagues at the Care and Repair Service's offices in the John's Hill area of the city. They are providing a service that is absolutely vital to older people in the area and the pride they take in their work was clear to see.

The Partnership, I learned from the highly driven WAP team, also carry out and support initiatives around critical areas of community need such as suicide prevention, transgender awareness, community strengthening and supporting volunteers.

The people of Waterford seemed aware of and appreciative of the work the Partnership carries out on the frontline and that means that all facets of society from the ex-prisoner to the elderly engage with them.

Who knows, they might even roll out a



Jack Walsh

special programme for toll ladies with an aversion to copper next year. Luckily for her, I went through a different toll-booth on the way home.

## Defined: Hip-Hop

The phrase hip-hop is derived from two different slang terms. Hip meaning cool, current and fashionable and hop meaning to dance.

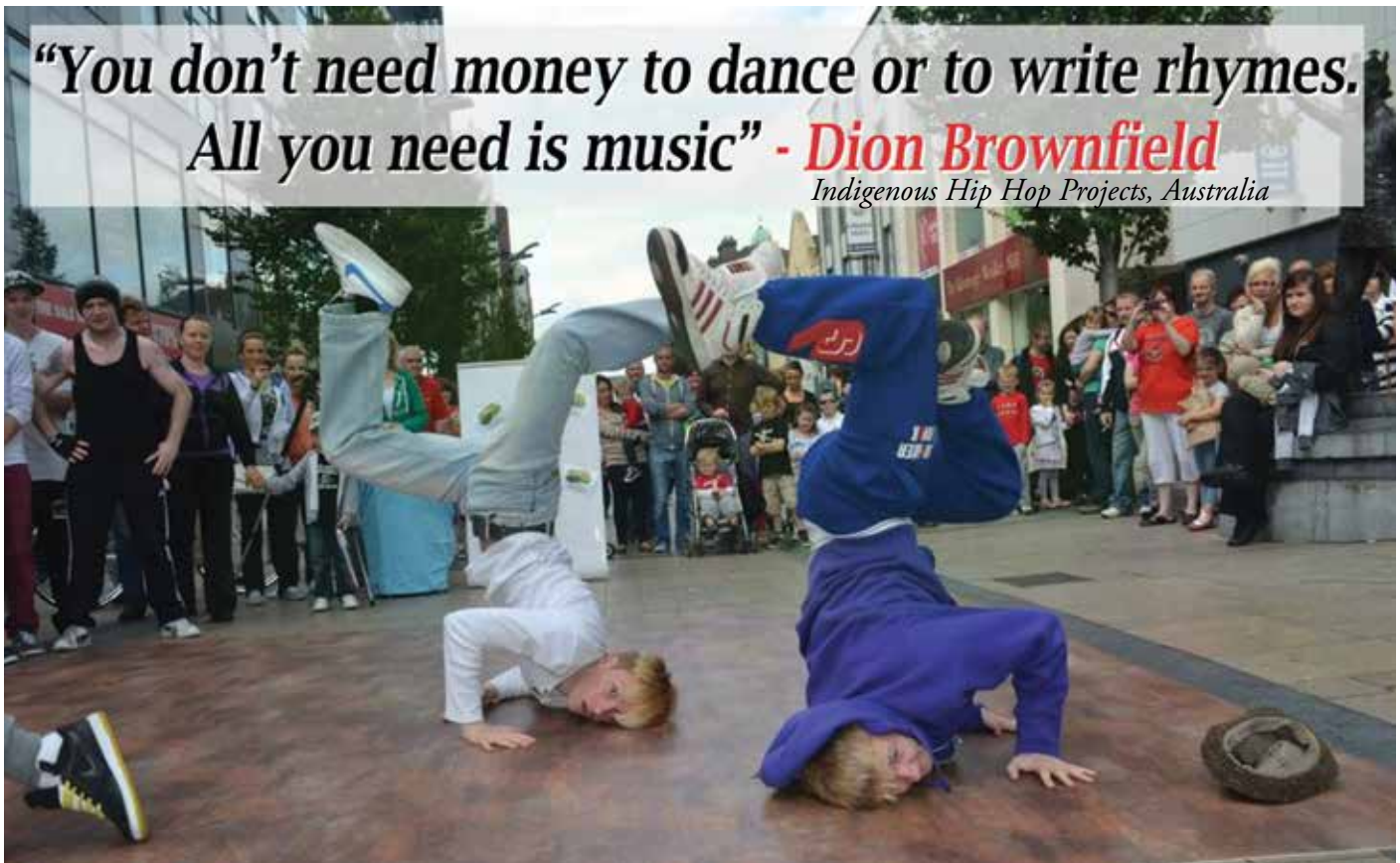
It originated in the Bronx, New York City, among African/ Americans playing records

and incorporating their own "shouts" over them. This led to mixing, sampling and rapping which are common place in today's music.

There are a number of elements of hip-hop culture. They include rapping, DJing,

beatboxing, dancing, graffiti writing and subversion of language.

Community workers have learned that hip-hop frees young people to express themselves and it can be used as a tool for personal and community development.



## Why are so many turning to hip-hop?

*It can be used as a community and personal development tool*

**Robert McNamara reports**

Hip-hop is a cultural phenomenon we all know about.

Whether we like it or not - or even understand it - it's everywhere.

It's on TV, the radio, the internet, in clothes shops and on the streets.

Kids love it, they engage with it; more

importantly, they identify with it.

It's a subculture that originated in the seventies on the other side of the Atlantic, in the clamour of the Bronx, a concrete jungle dominated by high-rise buildings and apartment blocks, far different to the rural/urban overlap of most Irish towns.

In the poor areas it flourished and among African and Hispanic communities it became a way of life.

In recent years, in every town and city, Ireland's youth has adopted elements of hip-hop's culture as a symbol of identity - particularly in disadvantaged communities. Ireland is not alone.

In Japan, Kenya and Bangladesh, among others, it's become a mainstream form of music.

National Geographic has labeled it "the world's favorite youth culture" in which "just about every country on the planet seems to have developed its own local rap scene."





## **Irish people identify with hip-hop**

Stewart O'Keeffe (24) – aka JackOfAllTradez – is an independent rapper/producer originally from Cork, but living in Limerick. “Irish people identify with hip-hop because it's a way of expression and we generally can't express our emotions openly without being discouraged or picked on for our flaws.”

“I think we relate to rap and hip-hop because it makes us feel accepted, but different. At the moment, Ireland is a down and out culture. Well, rap came from the voice of a down and out culture. So it gives us a say. I definitely feel like it gives me a purpose.”

## **Hip-hop and community development**

So, how can communities in Ireland use it? Connecting with young people seems to be the key. Ross Herlihy is one of the people behind ‘LiveStyles’ Fest in Cork, an annual event that made its debut in 2012 to much acclaim. It featured Bboys, Bgirls, DJs, MCs as well as barbeques and workshops.

“A lot of young people who get into hip-hop would have felt very disenfranchised growing up,” says Ross. “Some kids feel a bit disconnected – I wasn't really one for GAA for example.”

“What we are trying to do is develop that connection from primary schools up, to show that there are active role models that children can engage with who are into the same things as them.”

“They participate with the same kind of dedication that people who partake in sport or any other kind of recreation do.”

Community groups have been among the first to spot the movement's potential and local development companies from Cork to Donegal and Dublin to Clare have supported the promotion of hip-hop in recent years. In Offaly, hip-hop is part and parcel of Shakefest 2013, an annual event supported by Offaly Local Development.

## **‘You learn how to behave’**

Limerick's first hip-hop festival, ‘Make-a-Move’, took place last June and was partly funded and supported by PAUL Partnership. It featured workshops, live performances and street art displays.

“Two participants from a community arts group that PAUL had paid for and supported wanted to do something around hip-hop, as it's very popular and lots of young people are engaged in it. We saw the sense in that and we wanted to continue that supports,” says development worker, Karen O'Donnell O'Connor.

One of those participants, Barry Burke, otherwise known as Bazzzy-B, is a co-founder

of Limerick hip-hop group ‘Limrockers Cru’ and was instrumental in the organisation of the dance element of Make-A-Move.

“Sport is done very well here in Limerick, it's brought a lot of people and business to the city. The same could be done on a smaller scale with dance. It's all about using dance like you use sport for self-discipline and self-control, learning about who you are and how to behave.”

“Nearly every other city in the world has a government funded building or a city centre location where people come together, dance and share ideas. There are so many possibilities for hip-hop.”

**Make-A-Move** will again take place in Limerick this July and will feature all elements of hip-hop including Street Dancing, Mc'ing, Rapping, Street Art and Graffiti.

## **Hip-hop as a vessel for change**

Hip-Hop has long been used as a tool to encourage societal change and community and personal development.

Across the Atlantic in Boston, the genre is used by an organisation that call themselves ‘Project Hip-Hop’ as a platform to help young people address issues around social justice.

The organisation was formed in 1993 to raise awareness among young people about institutional racism.

They sent a multi-cultural group of nine youths and four adults down to the South in a van to meet civil rights veterans and visit sites that are important to the civil rights movement.

A “rolling classroom” if you like.

Teachers began to take heed of the peer-to-peer learning benefits of hip-hop and they welcomed members of ‘Project Hip-Hop’ into their schools.

Today the organisation uses hip-hop culture and the history of resistance to injustice as the primary tools for engaging and developing young people as artists and community organisers.

## **What about all that gangster rap?**

Anyone with a knowledge of hip-hop will know it can be intellectually articulate, politically aware and a tool for unleashing young people's talents.

Some, perhaps ignorant about its origins and culture argue that hip-hop has been used to promote materialism, sexism and the glorification of crime.

They're missing the real point, says Dion Brownfield of Indigenous Hip Hop projects in Australia: “We never play or support any of the music artists that explore that derogatory, sexist, violent side. For example, in a confidence circle

you would be more likely to hear James Brown's ‘Turn It Loose’ than some sort of gangster song. Once communities see how we work they love it.

## **Poverty means having more stress to let go**

He says hip-hop doesn't require any expensive equipment and it is healthy.

“You don't need money to dance, or to write rhymes. All you need is music. Most youth from low-income families have experienced more traumas in their lives than others. They have more built-up stress and trauma to get out of their bodies and minds and they love to release that by getting creative and dancing.”

Many forms of art have evolved under the umbrella of hip-hop including rapping, break dancing, graffiti art and beatboxing. It's cool, it's contemporary and as Ross Herlihy points out:

“When politicians talk to some of the older people involved in hip-hop, they see it's not just teenagers running around doing whatever they want... There's people who are still active in hip-hop into their forties.”



## ***“Hip-hop is risky territory, but so worth it”***

***Catherine O'Halloran, Youth Worker***



Community organisations with a reputation to uphold with the general public, never mind their funders, enter “risky territory” when they agree to fund hip-hop activities.

Many people misunderstand hip-hop to be nothing more than a woman-hating, gangster-led movement dominated by hoodies.

The rewards however can be incredible, according to Catherine O'Halloran, one of the organisers behind one such festival that benefitted from an open-minded approach by its local development company.

“Wake up! We need to open ourselves up and embrace what is around us. When we say hip-hop, we really are talking about youth culture and we should embrace it hip-hop, it's a really spirited young people's culture.

“We are challenging perceptions and it was risky territory for the PAUL Partnership because of the notions that hip-hop is gang-related and endorses violence and there is credit due to PAUL for that. They were open from the beginning, and nobody expected our ‘Make A Move’ festival

to be as successful as it was. Now other agencies want to get involved in this year's one. They see the success.

“We need to recognise this art form as legitimate and there is a responsibility on community development agencies and city councils - and their representatives - to give it the same platform that the fine arts get. That's what I'm pushing for.

“It's about working with what is, shaping and tailoring it and making sure we're moving it in a positive direction.

“Supporting hip-hop is a genuine form of community engagement.... Let young people define their culture for themselves and have no shame around it. There's a huge horse culture around here yet there's shame attached to it. People should be proud of their culture.

“I've seen people who felt disillusioned, disempowered - even oppressed - coming together for hip-hop and they became inspired. It's a move away for them from the ways they'd normally express their aggression or their frustrations with the world.

“Putting your experiences into words is a very powerful thing, there's something therapeutic in it and that's what hip-hop is.”

“Agencies and organisations that get behind hip-hop should find it very rewarding.”

This year's ‘Make A Move’ festival will be held from July 26-28th and will feature national and international artists.

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

**Catherine O'Halloran is a youth worker with the Follow Your Dream project based in St. Munchin's Family Resource Centre in Ballynanty, Limerick. Interview by: Allen Meagher.**

### ***5 websites about hip-hop used for community development***

[www.projecthiphop.org/who-we-are/history/](http://www.projecthiphop.org/who-we-are/history/)  
[www.indigenoushiphop.com/](http://www.indigenoushiphop.com/)  
[www.thehiphopproject.org/site/](http://www.thehiphopproject.org/site/)  
[www.facebook.com/rossherlihy](http://www.facebook.com/rossherlihy)  
[www.makeamove.ie](http://www.makeamove.ie)



***Not the usual suspects – the councillor, the youth worker, the city mayor, the graffiti artist and the local authority official (Tom Shortt, Catherine O'Halloran, Gerry McLoughlin, DMC and Paul Foley). “This photo shows the level of integration that happened,” says Catherine.***



## 5 steps to holding your own hip-hop festival

By Karen O'Donnell-O'Connor\*

### No. 1 - Get Started!

Bring a group of knowledgeable and dedicated people together.

Make sure you have a blend of artists, hip hop experts, youth workers, people with funding skills, reporting skills and experienced arts events organisers.

### No. 2 - Make Decisions!

Look at how best to link with young people, to give them some ownership of the events. Eg Organise workshops in the lead-up to the festival.

Having one person who sees the big picture will make everyone's life easier. If you can put some money aside to pay a festival director, do it!

Decide what kind of hip-hop events best suit your festival.

Decide what artists are best to book. Get booking as they are in demand!

### No. 3 - Fund it!

Research what kinds of funding are available through your local authority, the Arts Council, etc. Be aware of application deadlines and what they will and won't pay for.

Use existing resources wherever possible. Raise funds locally. A number of small donations can really add up!

### No. 4 - Get Support on Board!

Talk to local community groups and local arts institutions about facilities and support.

Talk to the business community. Make sponsors an official "friend of the festival".

Talk to pubs and clubs about bringing hip-hop acts to their venues to widen the festival out to the general community.

Ask yourselves what kind of volunteer support is needed.

Recruit volunteers through your website, Facebook account and Twitter. Set up a website, Facebook account and Twitter!

### No. 5 - Keep Talking:

The festival committee should meet regularly, probably weekly. The committee makes sure security, insurance, health and safety and finance are in place for the festival. Make sure every committee member is sure of their role. Contact the press before, during and after the festival. Thank everyone who helped.

Meet afterwards to evaluate how well the festival went and whether you'd like to run it again. Ensure that reporting is done for funding bodies as required.

\* Karen O'Donnell O'Connor is the Community Development Officer with PAUL Partnership and is a member of the organising committee of 'Make A Move' in Limerick. The hip-hop festival grew from a community arts training programme run by PAUL.



## Sharing Festival Materials Saves Money

Every festival committee in the country rents out many of the same things every year - a public address system, crowd control barriers, street cones, perhaps a small marquee.

However, a new approach pioneered by Cavan-Monaghan LEADER (CML) has taken some of the pressure off organising committees.

Last year, CML hit upon the idea of bringing together the organisers of everything from bog-snorkelling, to pipe-band parades to film and drama festivals, so they could apply for funding as a cluster. They then buy what they need, share it between them and look after it.

In Cavan-Monaghan, for example, local festival committees now own semi-permanent signs that are designed to allow the sign insert to be



*A world record attendance of Incredible Hulks at the Muckno Mania Festival last year, one of the beneficiaries of CML's new funding approach.*

changed depending on what festival is on.

"The economic downturn led to less sponsorship for festivals and organisers were approaching us for support," said John Toland of CML, "and in many cases the same equipment was being hired by a number of festivals in the same geographic area."

In 2012, five cluster groups received some €300,000 to support nearly 30 festivals and the

new approach is seen as a model of best practice that development companies across the country may wish to emulate.

There's more to it than has been explained here and John Toland can provide further information.

T: 049-4338477

E: johntoland@cmlleader.ie

## Kerry village wins unique prize

A village in North Kerry has won an unique prize, courtesy of North East Kerry Development working with an inter-agency committee.

Ballyduff has won a programme to become a 'Community of Excellence' in promoting mental health awareness and well-being. It involves bringing as much training, talks and fun events to the village as possible, all tailored to the village's needs and requests.

The one-year pilot programme was launched in style by actress and author Mary McEvoy on March 14th and, in a show of support on the night, every one of the 140 seats in Ballyduff Community Centre was occupied.

"On the night, Mary spoke about her own experiences of depression," reported Lorraine Bowler of NEKD. "She told Ballyduff how lucky they were to have this project, saying if she had this kind of support when she was younger the sky would have been the limit for her."

Mary's book 'How the Light Gets In' describes her own struggles.

In the short time since the launch the village has held three more events while others are in the pipeline.

Ballyduff won the unusual prize after villages in North Kerry were asked to apply and compete with each other. They had to say how they thought their community would benefit from the kind of programme on offer.

A new local group now develops ideas suggested by the local community and they are aiming for "a community where all



*Mary McEvoy with Dan O'Connor, development manager with Kerry Mental Health Association, in Ballyduff on March 14th. Photo by Oskars Krastins.*

ages come together to support each other as we build on our ability to become more resilient in challenging times by continuing to learn and to grow."

NEKD say, that if the pilot proves successful, similar projects may be rolled out in villages across North Kerry and possibly nationwide.

"The project is about people striving for a more connected society and living life as happily as we can," says Lorraine "We would hope other Local development companies around the country might take this up in the future."

The Institute of Technology Tralee (ITT) is helping to monitor and evaluate the project as it unfolds, while former trainer to the Cork Senior Hurling Team, Jerry Wallace, is lending his support. He

currently trains the Ballyduff hurlers.

At the launch night, information stands were staffed by folks from: Kerry Mental Health Association, Console, the Openarms Project, Pieta House, Living Links, Buds FRC, the HSE, the Samaritans, Kerry Travellers Development Group, the Social Health and Education Project, North East Kerry Development (NEKD) and a host of other agencies and organisations eager to be involved.

Since the launch, Ballyduff has organised three more events and it plans to run personal development courses, a mindfulness workshop, a 'Mind Yourself' programme and a family fun day shortly.

**The project is hosted by Buds Family Resource Centre. T: 066-7148883.**

## Kerryman's 'Penrelief' idea

A new 'get-it-off-your-chest' website set up in March has got people from Ireland and around the world writing about their mental health challenges, **REPORTS ALLEN MEAGHER.**

It's attracted the attention of two major suicide prevention agencies which are in discussions with the founder, while a cancer support group are going to take the idea and adapt it for their own use.

Penrelief.com was set up by Tralee-based Ger Collins who says that putting his thoughts into words was very beneficial in helping him overcome his own mental health problems.

Ger, who is the chairperson of Shanakill Family Resource Centre, has a team of volunteers involved in the project.

"I'm not a counsellor and I refer people onto professionals when I can," says Ger. "Seven people have gone into counselling since the site was launched, people who wouldn't have done so otherwise."

Singer and addiction counselor, Frances Black, recently endorsed the site which had over 5,000 'hits' in its first month.

**To contact Ger Collins, email [penrelief@gmail.com](mailto:penrelief@gmail.com) or ring 087-683-9713.**





## CAN YOU SAY WHAT IN PRINT?!

*Can you say "langer" in print, I ask the editor.*

- Can you say what?!, he chokes.

*'Cos you're a complete langer. I thought I had a job for life writing for 'Changing Ireland', then the recession came and you made me redundant. Langer.*

- Sure Horace, he says, reality is stranger than fiction now, there's no work for you no more.

*Ah f\*\*\*, give me a chance, says I to him, how about I cheer up readers by pointing out that, bad as things are they could be worse?*

*He gives me the nod.*

*I write a crazy fictional piece about the cold Spring and the fodder crisis being followed by a series of ferocious heatwaves.*

- It's called climate change, says he. Already been predicted by the Kiwi, Ken Ring.

*Ok, instead imagine the banks bring in rules that if you're behind in mortgage repayments you can only have one car and €30 a week for leisure activities.*

- It's happening, he says. And, I know plenty of people who'd queue to have that standard of living. Where can they pick up the car, they're asking.

*I think really hard.*

*Imagine we were so daft we paid out subsidies to millionaire Saudi princes who kept horses in Ireland, but everytime we saw a poor, young fella riding a horse around town bareback (quite a skill that) we went nuts, called the cops, took the horse and told him go buy a goldfish.*

- Tesco is all for rounding up stray horses.

*At least ordinary folk don't have to go to soup-kitchens yet.*

- They do.

*Yeah, but we don't live in the third world, children aren't going hungry.*

- Ask Barnardos!

*The recession gets so bad that people actually have to give up drugs.*

- If the country can give up its independence, folks giving up smokes isn't striking.

*I'll write about tax havens and the rich getting richer.*

- Not news.

*Ireland finds gas and oil, but f\*\*ks up and gives it all away.*

He yawns.

*Ok, imagine if the unemployed had to work for the dole.*

The langer extends his yawn.

*They close down social welfare offices so you'd have to travel 25 miles when you have an emergency but you can't 'cos you haven't any money.*

- Tell me something new, he says, give me something truly horrible that hasn't happened yet.

*Community sector budgets get cut by 40% over four years, then the services are privatised and community workers end up on the dole.*

- Yawn...

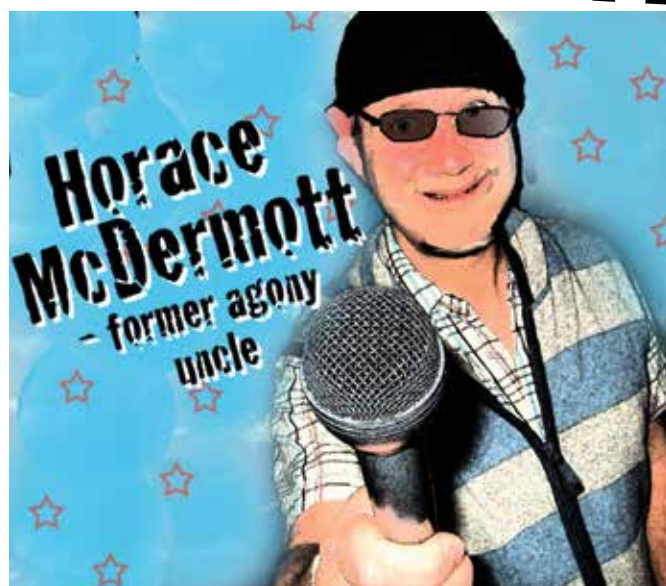
*Retirement age increases every year by two years so by the time you're ready to retire you're at least 110.*

- Sure, we're heading that way if the Americans or the North Koreans don't nuke us.

*Ok – the worst thing imaginable – Fianna Fail come back from the dead and get into power.*

- Tell me more, says he, and I get all excited.

*Imagine Labour get wiped, Fianna Fail go into coalition with Fine Gael and Dr James O'Reilly and Phil Hogan get another five years to go round*



**One-time community worker Horace McDermott used to write a nonsensical diary and an agony uncle column for 'Changing Ireland' during the Celtic Tiger years. Here he writes about how hard it is to get work today, even with us.**

*charging us for things that used to be free.*

- Now you're talking.

*With Brian Cowen as Taoiseach once again.*

- Now you're really hurling. Can't print it though; imagine Cowen reads it, gets notions and launches his comeback fight all thanks to us. No thanks. What else have you to say?

*You're some langer!*



## MA Programmes

More information from  
[www.ul.ie/sociology](http://www.ul.ie/sociology)  
or [www.graduateschool.ul.ie](http://www.graduateschool.ul.ie)



### MA in Sociology - Youth, Community & Social Regeneration f/t, p/t

(See <http://bit.ly/14pXEzA>)

This one-year full time or two-year part-time programme aims to equip students with the skills necessary to engage with contemporary theoretical, policy and practice-related issues relating to work and study with young people in the national and international context of community regeneration. The course offers a critical forum where the complexities of social regeneration can be addressed. It builds upon existing research and teaching strengths at undergraduate and postgraduate levels within the Department of Sociology, namely inequality and social exclusion; the welfare state; social change; youth and community, social regeneration and sociological research methods. The programme also offers the possibility of taking elective modules at NUIG and at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick (MIC). Upon completion of the MA students will be well equipped to embark on PhD research in this area and / or into different areas of the labour force across a wide range of career paths. These paths include, but are not limited to, research careers, policy development, youth and community work and professional engagement in the processes of social regeneration.

**Course Director:** Dr Martin Power  
**Email:** [martin.j.power@ul.ie](mailto:martin.j.power@ul.ie)

### MA in Sociology - Youth, Community & Social Regeneration f/t, p/t

(See [www3.ul.ie/gcs/graduate-study/](http://www3.ul.ie/gcs/graduate-study/))

This one year full-time or two year part-time programme is designed specifically for students interested in the interdisciplinary study of gender and sexuality in culture and society. Depending on disciplinary background, students can choose to specialise in, or combine social scientific, historical and literary/cultural approaches. The course prepares students for careers in education, the media, government, private enterprise, national and international NGO sectors and for further academic research in related areas. Students on this MA programme benefit from the active research culture fostered by the Gender, Culture & Society @UL programme (HYPERLINK "<http://www3.ul.ie/gcs/>" <http://www3.ul.ie/gcs/>) and the wider research activities of the UL-NUI Galway Gender ARC research consortium.

**Course Director:** Dr. Breda Gray  
**Email:** [breda.gray@ul.ie](mailto:breda.gray@ul.ie)

### MA in Sociology - Applied Social Research f/t, p/t

(See <http://www.ul.ie/graduate-studies>)

This one year full-time or two year part-time programme focuses on attaining practical sociological research skills across a spectrum. The MA while solidly grounded in sociological research methods offers in tandem a critical exploration of key contemporary issues such as exclusion, social change and hierarchies of knowing. This MA is designed specifically for students who are passionately interested in the study of society and who want to commit to careers in this area. While the focus is on research methods there is a menu of linked modules that explore key sociological issues. The course prepares students for careers in social research in government agencies, voluntary - sector organisations, private enterprise, academia, the media and the education sector. Students on this MA programme benefit from the active research culture fostered within the Department of Sociology [www.ul.ie/sociology](http://www.ul.ie/sociology).

**Course Director:** Mary O' Donoghue  
**Email:** [mary.odonoghue@ul.ie](mailto:mary.odonoghue@ul.ie)

There's been a significant decline in children smoking and more modest declines in drinking and teenage pregnancies. – UNICEF.

*"Changing Ireland", c/o Community Enterprise Centre, Moyross, Limerick*  
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