

Autumn 2013

BUMPER EDITION

CHANGING IRELAND

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Issue 43 - The national magazine of the Local and Community Development Programme - www.changingireland.ie

The nationwide awakening of people who... **'CAN'T LIVE ANYWHERE WITHOUT A HORSE'**

Horse-owner Róisín
Kearney tells her
community's story

Page 5

10,000 new jobs you
haven't heard about



Pages 12-15

Dublin Street Leagues



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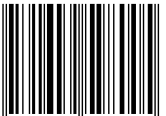
ALSO INSIDE:

- Zen and the Art of Local Development • A Donegal prescription for healthier communities • Dubs at King Billy's Belfast bonfires
- Volunteers give town's spirit a lift • Retrofit your community
- 8 big wins by young people • AND MUCH MORE!

FREE WITH THIS EDITION

A view from inside the direct provision asylum-seeker system.

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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.



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Give them a chance



There's something about people who want to keep horses on the green or in their backyard in urban estates. It's not everyone's cup of tea, but when you hear a 16 year old say "horses are my life", you take notice.

Sulkie riding is a phenomenon that has been with us for a long time and it's not going away anytime soon. In fact, threatened legislation is partly responsible for pushing horse-owners to get organised.

Roisin Kearney's story – she tells it well – is becoming typical: local people are becoming community leaders by standing up for their right, while behaving responsibly, to keep horses. They're putting it up to local authorities, some of which are proving capable of responding by engaging properly with the community groups.

Most recently, Limerick City/County Council reportedly allocated €2 million to a community horse project. They may learn a trick or two

from visiting Roisin Kearney and her committee in Clondalkin.

In this issue, we report on horse projects in Cork, Tipperary, Dublin and Kerry. All received some form of support through the Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP). From our research, it's evident that listening to community workers and to horse-owners is essential to the success of these projects.

Handled properly, it could auger well for future relationship building between local authorities and local communities, speaking of which, a new working group on community engagement has been set up, led by Fr Sean Healy of Social Justice Ireland. In a few weeks time, his group will be advising Minister Hogan on the next steps to take.

The outcome from Pobal's research is clear: Over 10,000 people who were previously long-term unemployed are in steady employment today.

The LCDP is evidently successful in this niche area, providing the only chance in many instances for people "most removed" from the labour market to regain employment.

A startling 66% of these new small enterprises have made it through the first two years. Many have become employers themselves.

Of course, businesses also fall through. The encouraging finding from the research was that support from most Local Development Companies continues right through this period and indeed afterwards when self-starters have to pick up the pieces and try something else (training, a new business, emigration, etc).

Finally, you don't need to be an expert to see that the now annualised cut to budget funding for Community and Voluntary Sector groups will have a severe impact this year.

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Front Cover Image: Roisin Kearney with her nephew Leon Denton.

Shortly after the photo was taken, Roisin lost the foal to 'The Pound'.

Their actions prompted Roisin to get people organised

Thanks To . . .

'Changing Ireland' thanks everyone involved in the production of Issue 43.

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 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.

EXPERIENCE POINTS TO EMBRACING OUR URBAN COWBOYS

Reframing sulky riding in a positive context

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

Anyone who's seen the video of sulky riders taking over both sides of the Cork-Mallow road would be inclined to think sulky racing was a menace.

Indeed, prosecutions did follow, an outcome welcomed as much by community groups as by the general public.

However, the exception does not prove to be the rule and as Chrissie O'Sullivan from the Traveller Visibility Group (TVG) says of the urban horse culture, "media portrayal has not been helpful."

She argues that, "The issue of horse ownership should never have become a negative issue."

In 1996, legislation was introduced that made it almost impossible to legally own and ride a horse in an urban area.

The Control of Horses Act has not so much eroded the sub-culture, as driven it underground.

If a stranger were to enquire about who owns any of the dozen or so horses grazing on land across the road from 'Changing Ireland's office in Moyross, they'd have to wait until hell freezes over before they get an answer.

ANIMAL WELFARE & CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

This raises issues over public liability, animal welfare and civic responsibility. It leaves people in housing estates who dislike horse-dung on their doorsteps with little recourse to action.

"It raises issues in every county in the country," says Chrissie. TVG held a seminar earlier this year to promote the positives.

Of course, horse-owners themselves have at times been responsible for producing media that contributes to the negative portrayal. Over half-a-million people have watched video uploads of the sulky-race on the Cork-Mallow road. The film was shot by some of those involved.

In response to the race, Cork County Joint Policing Committee recently proposed legislation that would see sulky racers wear helmets and take other safety precautions. They would also be required to seek permission in advance of races.

However, the committee did not call for an outright ban, perhaps recognising there are positives to sulky-riding. In fact, embracing the urban horse culture represents a tremendous opportunity to reach minority groups from youths to Travellers.

As Chrissie told the seminar, "The ownership of horses is the last most tangible link back to the Traveller nomadic way of life.... And local authorities can make a big contribution and have

secured access to land and stabling in some areas."

HORSE PROJECT CHALLENGES & REWARDS

TVG's seminar was attended by John McCormack, director of services with Kilkenny County Council, who spoke from experience about the challenges and rewards in setting up a social horse project. A number of cases of animal cruelty have been documented so far this year in Kilkenny, yet John highlighted the willingness to drive on with the project. The council works closely with Kilkenny Leader Partnership on the project.

In Cork, Chrissie's colleague John O'Sullivan works as TVG's men's development worker and he sees it in very simple terms: "Travellers would be a happier people, if there were proper places to keep horses."

And proper places to race.

Motorsport rally driving on public roads is facilitated by the authorities and Martin Collins of Pavee Point believes that "steps could be taken to facilitate sulky racing in a safe context."

In Limerick and Clondalkin and other places, groups of horse owners have come together in recent months and recognise they have responsibilities as well as needs (chiefly recognition by the authorities).

Will Limerick as a City of Culture organise a sulky race next year? It's possible, although Limerick's bye-laws curtail the urban horse culture.

REDUCES ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Wicklow-based Sharon Newsome of the Irish Horse Welfare Trust has countrywide experience of the potential of the alternative approach.

"Managed horse projects... support personal and leadership skills, offer proven mental health benefits and reduce anti-social behaviour," she says.

Sharon goes so far as to say that, "Horse projects have an important role to play in achieving the goals of the Government's National Action Plan for Social Inclusion."

It's not easy work for local authorities – it involves deep community engagement with distrustful groups in disadvantaged areas – but councils that have supported such projects have seen side-benefits. For example, Fingal County Council's bill for impounding horses has fallen by 70%, says Sharon.

Models of good practice have been developed,

in Kerry and Kilkenny to name but two counties. The challenge is to take the models and put them into practice.

Note: Pavee Point and Kilkenny Leader Partnership receive funding through the LCDP



Sulky-racing on both sides of a main road...

The 'No Horses' sign (pictured on top of this page) was erected after horses were slipped into a football pitch to graze, ruining the facility for local youngsters for months afterwards.

Photo: AM



CORK SEMINAR AIM

The Traveller Visibility Group (TVG) in Cork held a national seminar to promote the positives about urban horse projects, particularly among Travellers.

The seminar, held in Cork in March, aimed "to highlight positive examples of horse ownership across the country" and to build momentum for a national network of people interested in social horse projects.



Clondalkin

A HORSE PROJECT FOR THE PEOPLE IS WITHIN REACH

- "Unreal partnership support" propels horse project forward



Clondalkin Equine Club in Dublin is a community group that came together to create a sustainable solution to the urban equine issue in their area and indeed nationwide. Roisin Kearney (pictured above) is its leader.

ROISIN KEARNEY WRITES*

CPLN Partnership was one of the first community groups we contacted last September. They were unreal. I didn't know much about them, just that they published our local newsletter.

CPLN* and the Dolcain project gave us their full support in helping our group to grow into a strong, skilled learning organisation and they're sticking with us all the way.

Michelle Kearns from the Dolcain Project has attended our weekly committee meetings, guiding our group to become well organised and a stronger asset to the community. She also helped our group secure office space through Action Community Enterprise (ACP) so we can have a base to hold meetings and store files. ACP have also offered to help our group write a business and operational plan for when we source the land to run the club.

Already from the committee forming, I've gone from being unemployed to starting on a Community Employment Scheme with Dolcain Project and I'm going back to college to do youth and community studies.

Another committee member who has not been in education in over 20 years is starting studies as a

veterinary technician funded by the VEC.

The VEC is also committing to give our whole group training to help us upskill.

One of our youth members, an early school leaver, is looking into studying to become a master farrier (aka blacksmith).

Another committee member has already started an equine instructor course through FAS and he's doing extremely well and plans to go on after this year.

The whole committee has got certs in child protection and some in first aid through Clondalkin Youth Service who are giving the horse project their full support. They helped us out with buses for different trips we organised and they've attended meetings with the youth members of the committee to learn child protection.

"I've gone from being unemployed to starting on a CE scheme... Another committee member is starting veterinary studies... Another has started an equine instructor course... An early school leaver hopes to train as a farrier... And the whole committee has got certs in child protection."

Clondalkin Equine Club wishes to be inclusive of all members of our community and we've engaged with the Traveller community on a number of occasions. I met with Clondalkin Travellers Development Group and spoke at a meeting with Clondalkin Travellers Training Centre where I gave

out membership forms.

From these meeting we've more Traveller members than before and we're holding a community sulky drive where members of the Travelling community and settled community are coming together to celebrate the anniversary of the Deansrath parish.

The Club strongly believes this project heralds a new beginning and provides new hope for all those in the area with an interest in horses. In our short existence we've mobilised the community on the equine issue, we're properly constituted and we link in with relevant community groups.***

Champion jockey Johnny Murtagh is now the patron of the club and has offered all the support he can. He attended our first fundraiser where we raised over €3000 towards sourcing insurance.

Members of our committee have also linked in with same-minded community members in Limerick and we attended their first public meeting in Ballinacurra-Weston to speak about how we got to where we are today. There were over 60 at that meeting and the lads in limerick have now formed their committee to drive their social horse project forward.

A range of direct and indirect benefits could be developed around this project including training, employment, social enterprise, social cohesion, reduction in community tension and social inclusion, which makes this club attractive to any statutory agency with a duty to provide equality of access and opportunity.

For example, there are jobs in the horse industry and some estates here have unemployment rates of over 55 per cent. A horse project isn't going to change the world, but it can help.

I hope people who could and should support this venture have the vision to see what we can see.

* Roisin Kearney is a voluntary committee member of the Clondalkin Equine Club. Address: c/o. Bawnogue Enterprise and Community Centre, Dublin 22. T: Dolcain Project (mornings only) 01-4576055. E: roisinkearney@gmail.com

** CPLN Partnership and Dodder Valley Partnership have since merged to form South Dublin Partnership.

*** They include: the Irish Horse Welfare Trust, South Dublin County Council, CPLN, Clondalkin Travellers Development Group, Local Drug Service, similar equine projects, animal welfare groups, Community Gardaí, the Community Safety Forum, John Loneran, Minister for Children, Frances Fitzgerald, Mayor of South Dublin County Council Dermot Looney, Sinn Féin reps, Fine Gael TD Derek Keating, People Before Profit rep Geno Kenny, Labour Party TD Joanna Tuffy and Fianna Fáil's Willie O'Dea.



A HORSE INSIDE

'Changing Ireland', based in Moyross, Limerick, has taken hundreds of photos of horses and their owners over the years. However, the horses rarely get inside.



Allen Meagher, Conor Cantillon, Daniel Roche and Nathan Keane (from left) Photo (copyright) by Joan Crowley

THE COMMUNITY WORKER'S ROLE

Clondalkin

Community worker Michelle Kearns is "astounded" by the progress of a social horse project in Clondalkin that she has been working with for the past year.

"I'm astounded by them. They're determined and they're giving people in the area something to be happy about," she said.

Michelle, who is employed by South Dublin Partnership, has lent support on a weekly basis to Clondalkin Equine Club, led by young volunteer Roisin Kearney.

"Roisin came to us a year ago. She got 70 people and local councillors out to a meeting. We were very impressed.

"Roisin never gives up. She is a natural

community worker, she knows what social inclusion means without any need to explain it to her. She broke her foot playing football recently and still went down on the train to Limerick to encourage people to get organised there.

"The club is probably one of the best groups I've ever worked with. Roisin and the committee have nabbed the Garda Commissioner's secretary, John Lonergan (ex-governor of Mountjoy) and Johnny Murtagh (jockey).

"They organise their own meetings, do the follow-up, do their own PR and four of them have gone back to education. I can see that their outlook on life has changed just by participating."

Michelle said her employer "has been

very supportive considering I've been attending horse project committee meetings every Tuesday since last October."

"I'm not a member of the group, that would be wrong. I support them to organise themselves, to write workplans and I help with funding applications. Everything else they do themselves. They're close to getting land and I think they're sustainable. I see social enterprise potential here. Jobs could come from this. The main aim however is for them to get recognition for the horse culture and to get support from the local authority."

For more information, contact Michelle Kearns at the Dolcain Project office.

T: 01-4576055.

OLDEST PROJECT IN COUNTRY "ON VERGE OF SUCCEEDING"

Kilkenny

In County Kilkenny, the LCDP supports one of the oldest horse projects in the country. Recently revitalised, it is "on the verge of succeeding".

"We're at this since 2002," said Martin Rafter, deputy CEO of Kilkenny Leader Partnership. He was fresh from a meeting with horse-owners.

"Kilkenny was at one stage one of the lead counties in terms of engagement and thinking that goes into a horse project," said Martin. "We had a number of land

rental regimes and worked with the men to develop their capacity around things such as animal welfare, good animal husbandry and land management."

They learned with the communities how to manage the cultural issues and deal with regulations, but progress stalled.

Said Martin: "Nothing happened with the project for three years, but now ourselves, the local authority and the horse-owners are doing a huge amount of work. The project is on the verge of succeeding.

"We have a strategic plan (available on request), we have land (via the council)

and we're bringing the men to the stage where they can work co-operatively and are able to develop the project's commercial potential.

"We've a close working relationship with the Community and Culture Section of Kilkenny County Council which is great because we've a lot of young lads in their early 20s now owning horses. The demand is there," he added.

For more information, contact Martin. E: martin.rafter@cklp.ie T: 056-775-2111

DUBLIN

Cherry Orchard caters for 600+



'Changing Ireland' ran a double-page spread about Cherry Orchard Equine Centre (COEC) in Ballyfermot, Dublin, in our Autumn 2011 edition.

"They do great work, they provide education and they link in with young people," said Roisin Kearney of Clondalkin Equine Club.

However, Clondalkin Equine Project is different to COEC in a number of ways, one of the main differences being that the Clondalkin project wants horse-owners to be able to retain ownership of the horses. COEC had similar aims in the beginning, but went on to purchase 28 horses for people to ride under supervision. Over 600 young people use the facilities there every week.

HELMETS, HIGH-VIS VESTS & ANTI-ROLL BARS

Despite safety concerns, people immersed in the urban and Traveller horse culture appear to have a long way to go before they safety equipment becomes the norm.

The County Cork Joint Policing Forum recently called for high-visibility vests, helmets, anti-roll bars and other measures when sulky racing.

In other sports, safety has become paramount. However, 'Changing Ireland', based in Moyross, Limerick, has witnessed thousands of occasions where children, teenagers and adults ride bareback without

KERRY

Kingdom's 5-steps to a Social Horse Project

In Co. Kerry, they took an inter-agency approach and brought together Kerry County Council, Tralee Town Council, the Gardai, Kerry Traveller Development Project and Traveller horse owners. They agreed on the following:

1. The project would respond to the social, educational and employment needs of the horse-owners.
2. The project supports horse owners to comply with the Control of Horses Act.
3. All horses must be micro-chipped and there is a limit on the number of horses allowed per family.
4. Horse-owners pay a fee to be members of the group that covers renting stables, grazing and insurance costs. They also provide the hay.
5. Land would be provided by the authorities.

The Kingdom Curragh Horse Project has been recognised as a model of good practice and the results speak for themselves:

1. 22 acres of land around an old dump were acquired from Tralee Town Council.
2. The project has contributed to a drop in the number of roaming horses.
3. It is self-financing, in that now Kerry County Council spends less of its funding on the horse project than it once did on impounding horses.



protective headgear.

Cost is not a defence; riding helmets sell for as little as €10 second-hand. An attitudinal shift appears to be required.

"Everyone should wear a helmet," said Roisin Kearney from Clondalkin, Dublin, "although I've never worn one. But it is dangerous and we'll have to bring it in. It'll be new to people, it's foreign to them to wear a helmet. Saddles will have to come in as well."

During the summer, a seven-year old Traveller child died after a fall from a pony in Cork.

TIPPERARY

Association aims

Tipperary Travellers Horse Owners Association aims:

1. Ensure that horse-keeping remains a positive part of Traveller life in Tipperary.
2. Promote horse-owning and publicise its benefits.
3. Represent the interests of Traveller horse owners.
4. Negotiate with relevant authorities on behalf of members.
5. Provide information and advice to members.
6. Investigate opportunities for the development of horse keeping.
7. Promote animal welfare.

"I'M 16, HORSES ARE MY LIFE"



The horses are the best thing to keep you away from robbing cars, fires and house-robbing and stuff like that. You have to keep a horse well looked-after. What're we going to do in a skatepark? We've no interest in skating." - Ross Aspel, Clondalkin, Dublin.

“I COULDN’T LIVE ANYWHERE WITHOUT A HORSE”

Over 200 Traveller horse-owners form county association



Horse-owners in Cashel Co. Tipperary including Jimmy Reilly, Thomas O'Reilly and Jimmy and Paddy O'Reilly.

ALLEN MEAGHER REPORTS:

As development worker Eugene O'Donnell put it, “Anything that stops Travellers being able to maintain their strong relationship to horses will have a very negative impact on the community – especially for the mental health of men and young Travellers.”

Eugene was among those who recently met with local authority officials on behalf of the new Tipperary Travellers' Horse Owners Association.

Further meetings are anticipated.

“This is a burning issue and we got organised in advance,” said Eugene's colleague Brian Dillon. “There's no precedent for this. We've had six area meetings and, GAA-style, each area has elected two delegates and the council is listening. This should be done in every county, because the councils get away with not doing at least 60 per cent of what they're supposed to be doing for Travellers, because Travellers are not organised,” he said. “We've got the Gardai, probation services and Family Resource Centres behind us.”

WE’LL FIGHT IT TOGETHER

Michael Hutchinson is a member from Borrisokane: “There could be 70 or 80 lads at a meeting, from all over Tipperary,” he said. “I joined up because I heard the council was supposed to be taking the horses off the road. We're better off trying to fight it together.

“Lots of idiots have given us a bad name, Travellers as well, they're f**king it up for everybody, but most of us cause no problem. Horses have been our culture for thousands of years. We've horses here better looked after than they do in the Curragh and I've no bother with chipping my horses.”

Michael rents land for grazing, goes sulky racing “from time to time”, but mostly just takes a

horse out for a drive.

He lived in Limerick for five years, but a clampdown by the authorities there and a €600 fine for having a horse without a license – something that was almost impossible to get –

prompted him to move home to Borrisokane.

“It's my hometown,” he said, “and I've peace down here.”

He hoped the laws don't change: “I couldn't live anywhere without being able to keep a horse.”

O'DONOGHUE FROM KILLENAULE

Michael's cousin John O'Donoghue from Killenaule led the campaign to bring Traveller horse-owners across the county together: “I was impressed with the numbers at the meetings, but there's still a few around who haven't joined up.”

Michael had support from LCDP-funded community organisations, Tipperary Rural Travellers Project (who employ Eugene and Brian) and from North Tipperary Leader Partnership.

We spoke to Eugene just after he emerged from a meeting about bye-laws with South Tipperary County Council.

“It's a progressive step for us to even be invited to one of these meetings,” he remarked. “Our association aims to set up a formal structure so that the local authorities can work with us rather than be seen to work against the Traveller community. We want to regularly meet and thrash out issues and build up working relationships.”

TIPPERARY

Travellers in Tipperary – and indeed other counties – are so worried about proposed changes to bye-laws regarding the keeping of horses that over 200 of them have pulled together to seek negotiated solutions with the local authorities.

The authorities are sitting up and listening because they've never witnessed Travellers get so organised.

WE'RE TRYING TO HELP BOTH SIDES

As John had put it, “We're trying to help both sides. If there's a stray horse on the road and The Pound are going to be called, the council can get in touch with us and we'll get the horse moved. It will save us money and save the council money because we both have to pay The Pound every time a horse is taken.”

Said Eugene, “It would work something like a community alert system and we're offering to set it up county-wide.”

“We also want the local authorities to recognise that horses are a huge part of Traveller life, to recognise that animal welfare is also important to us and to consider giving us grazing access to land that is not in use,” said Eugene.

DIRECT PLEA TO COUNCIL

Rates of depression, self-harm and suicide among Travellers are much higher than average and as the association stresses, “For many Travellers, horses provide a reason for living.”

The association has made a direct plea to local authorities: “We want to be consulted about any legal or other changes that are to be introduced, and about how these changes are implemented. We believe that a strategy involving Travellers, rather than directed against them, will have social and economic benefits for everybody.”

The association also wants to discuss what happens inside pounds, in terms of animal welfare and costs.

For more information, contact Eugene O'Donnell from Tipperary Rural Travellers Project.

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M: 087-6837674

WORKERS' CONCERNS TO BE ADDRESSED

“SHORTLY” - MINISTER

- Follow-up sought after first union-dept meeting



SIPTU's Darragh O'Connor



Minister Phil Hogan

SIPTU and Department representatives met on September 24 to discuss issues arising for workers from the rolling out of proposals in ‘Putting People First’ particularly “alignment” (closer ties between local authorities and local communities as part of the broad programme for reforming local government).

SIPTU official Darragh O'Connor said afterwards, “We asked, ‘Who will deliver the LCDP and RDP programmes?’ ‘What role will the Local Authorities have?’ ‘Will there be redundancies?’”

However, one meeting for the delegation, led by SIPTU Vice President Patricia King, was not sufficient: “Workers need a place to have their issues around alignment addressed... not just a one-off meeting. We are locked out as big decisions are made by the Department and employers,” said Mr O'Connor.

While the Government is introducing major changes nationally to the structures through which Local Development Companies operate the companies themselves are legally the employers.

The companies are currently negotiating with Department officials via a working group on alignment.

Minister Phil Hogan told the Dail on October 3rd: “In a couple of weeks time, we will know the structures and we will have further discussions with unions.”

He said the working group was about to complete its work and he would report back to the Dail then “on the next stage of the process, to assure workers we will continue to have a very strong community and local government partnership approach to the delivery of services to the people.”

He emphasised, “My Department has no role in the internal operations of the companies and, accordingly, does not have a role in staff or employment matters.”

However, Dail deputies Eric Byrne and Joan Collins pointed out the companies were community-led and objected to the “delay” in opening talks with SIPTU.

Ms Collins said: “Much negotiation has already been done and the workers have not been involved. Already, local authorities are going to the community development workers and saying that

they must work hand-in-hand with (them).”

SIPTU's campaign will continue. “Government and opposition TDs can clearly see that our demands are reasonable. They also understand that without the support and cooperation of workers alignment will fail,” said Mr O'Connor.

He added, “Members will take any opportunity to protect their jobs and the programmes they deliver, including meeting with senior Department officials.”

A Departmental spokesperson, Aidan O'Reilly, commented, “Senior departmental officials met with SIPTU and as we pointed out, the key social inclusion strengths of LDCs and their crucial role in service planning and delivery are clearly outlined in ‘Putting People First’. Furthermore, the LDCs have a key role to play going forward.”

“The Department's role is to follow up on proposals made in ‘Putting People First’ and we are currently doing that and are in negotiations with the Irish Local Development Network.

Meanwhile, impending cuts to core budgets are likely to have the greatest impact on LDC employees in the near future.

WHERE DO YOU READ YOURS?!

We're looking for someone to beat international rugby referee George Clancy's impressive submission... Recently, we asked readers to send in snaps of themselves reading ‘Changing Ireland’ (print or online) in unusual places. So far, we've seen ‘Changing Ireland’ being read in a stadium in San Juan, Argentina (George), in the Dail (Minister of State Jan O'Sullivan) and in a toilet (you know who you are)! Whatever or where next?!! Email: editor@changingireland.ie PS Cheers George!



PUBLICATION OF MID-TERM REVIEW IMMINENT

It has been confirmed that a much-anticipated report on the Local and Community Development Programme will be published shortly.

Clodagh McDonnell, Principal Officer with the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, stated:

“The Mid-Term Review of the Local and Community Development

Programme has been finalised and its recommendations will be taken on board in shaping the new successor programme to the LCDP, subject to funding provision in the upcoming Budget, and, mindful, as is usual, of the continuing need for budgetary restraint and discipline.

“The Mid-Term Review is currently in limited circulation among chief stakeholders, including those in the Community and Voluntary Sector. The intention is to publish it post-budget, after October 15th,” she said.

“WE DONE THE COMMUNITY PROUD”



ROMY CARROLL REPORTS

Boys known for getting up to far more than mere mischief on the streets of South Dublin are heroes in their communities now, having switched from the streets to become aces on the football field, taking home the champion's cup. Romy Carroll from Southside Partnership reports:

A strong and supportive crowd turned out to cheer on the Mounttown Oasis Project's Five-A-Side Football Team in Irishtown on the day they were crowned winners of Dublin's Late Night Soccer League, organised by the FAI and An Garda Síochána.

“My experience of the late night soccer league was really positive,” said Oasis player Zach, “because it got a bunch of groups to come together every Friday night instead of being in trouble on the streets causing problems. It's been a great event and it's given me an urge to get back playing football.”

Oasis began by winning their three group stage matches, went through to a tough semi-final against a strong Crumlin side that ended nil-all, leading to a penalty shootout which saw Oasis emerge 3-1.

The final was an outstanding game. Oasis beat Ballymun 5-4 in a thrilling match from start to finish with nobody giving up until the final whistle.

“When we won the tournament and were crowned the champions of Dublin it was a great feeling,” added Zach. “I think we deserve an emeritus for the hard work and time we put into it and we were all well behaved and we done (sic) the community proud.”

An emeritus is a mark of distinguished service and can mean that somebody has “served their time” or “merited one's discharge by service”.

Does that mean Zach and his teammates wish to retire?

How about holding onto the cup?

“It's been a great event and it's definitely given me the urge to get back playing football.”

A fellow teammate said, “It has enticed a few of the lads to take up football full-time. All the players trained hard and were a credit to their communities. Instead of being anti-social on Friday night we got together on the football pitch and put in a lot of hard work and effort. And it saw us through to winning the final.”

He added: “There was great camaraderie between the different communities who came to support each other (during the league).”

“The players gave 110% in training each night,” said Dave Hennessy, project worker with the Oasis Project.

He noted that the community “pulls together at times like this” and it got behind the players who, in turn, appreciated all the offers of help and sponsorship.

OASIS STARTED IN 1996

The Oasis Project was established in 1996 and is a drug prevention/early intervention youth project based in the Mounttown/ Dun Laoghaire area. It operates under the umbrella of Southside Partnership and receives funding through the local Drugs Taskforce. Oasis provides a safe and welcoming environment for young adults to meet, hang out, watch tv together, play video games and participate in outdoor activities.

For more info:
Contact Oasis on 01-2845722
W: mounttowncommunity.ie

YOUTH DIVERSION PROGRAMME

Open to young people aged 13-21, the street leagues are a diversionary programme that take place in disadvantaged areas during prime anti-social hours such as Friday nights.

Within a year of being launched, over 1,000 young people were involved and the league has continued to grow since 2008.

As well as drawing youths away from anti-social behaviour, the leagues act as “an integration tool” according to the FAI's Gerry Reardon who said it was normal to have ten or more nationalities playing football on any one night.

Late-night soccer leagues also operate in other parts of the country.



Garda Kate Daly Ní Bhrion of Balbriggan has noted that “in areas where it runs, anti-social behaviour is down 50 per cent.”

The street leagues are supported by the FAI, each of Dublin's local authorities and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs through its Young People's Facilities and Services Fund.

Rory O'Hare from the FAI said, “We've been running these projects throughout Dublin for the last two years with An Garda Síochána. It's an attempt to keep young men from anti-social and criminal behavior and to encourage them to build a respectful relationship with the Gardaí.”

PROJECT'S 89% SUCCESS RATE

A 2010 survey showed that 89% of 13-15 year olds participating in the street league said they would be hanging around, drinking or getting into trouble if they were not playing in the Late Night League. 90% of participants aged 16-21 said the same.

56% did not play any other form of organised football in their communities but they saw the Late Night League as an opportunity to keep out of trouble and as somewhere to go.

With 79% of participants unemployed at the time of the survey and not much changed since, the FAI described the programme as being “invaluable” to communities.

VOLUNTEERS REPLACE PAID WORKERS, BUT...

Working on a shoestring budget, sustained by tea bags, mars bars and a good sense of humour, Borrisokane Community Forum is doing what was done by paid local community workers until recently.

“Volunteers in Borrisokane are showing that a huge amount can be achieved by local people working together,” said forum chairperson Miriam Lewis and fellow-volunteer Catriona Lennon.

“But such volunteer effort is not a limitless resource. There needs to be more hands on support for initiatives such as ours. The State can't just pull the plug on community development in local communities.”

“The €1,346.20 spent by the Taoiseach's Department on tea and coffee in one month would finance this hard working group for at least 3 or 4 months,” said Miriam.



Borrisokane Community Forum members Donna McLoughlin, Catriona Lennon, and Miriam Lewis with Chris Chapman, author of the needs analysis report (2nd from left).

TOWN'S SPIRIT RISES AS VOLUNTEERS SHOW UP WITH TEA AND CHOCS

- In the absence of a full time community worker, volunteers in Borrisokane are doing it for themselves

Two years back, Borrisokane Community Forum featured in ‘Changing Ireland’ shortly after a pair of volunteers got the ball rolling. Miriam Lewis and Catriona Lennon tell us all they have achieved since then.

Here, they tell us how it's been:

Things have changed a lot. We established a presence on social media to raise our profile and we held our first AGM. We're all local people who care for and want to make a difference in the community.

The whole process of getting things up and running has been very interesting and if it wasn't for phones and e-mail, it would have been very slow. Sometimes, we wanted to pull our hair out, but we never gave up.

With the help of North Tipperary LEADER Partnership (NTLP) we took on a member of our group Donna McLoughlin for nine months through the Jobbridge scheme and NTLP let us use their rural transport office for our operations. Following a hugely successful year, Donna remains a committed volunteer member of our group.

In the early stages, a lot of Donna's and the group's time was spent on a local needs/resources analysis. We conducted surveys among all local community groups and businesses and afterwards held a public meeting in Borrisokane. Over 70 people attended and groups that emerged from that night acted as catalysts in setting up Borrisokane Food and Craft Market, Stella FM Radio and Borrisokane LocalSwitch Association, among others.

RTE's Operation Transformation leader Gregg Starr joined town mayor Darragh McKenna to launch our Needs/Analysis Report in March last year. The report contains results from the survey and local consultations, census information and recommendations to direct the community over the next few years. A copy is available from <http://bit.ly/17dnD86>.

Last September, a Jobs Fair initiative was organised in co-ordination with Borrisokane LocalSwitch Association and NTLP. As a result, 15 local people joined a ‘Start Your Own Business’ course.

WORK PLACEMENTS

Work placements have been a great help to us. Apart from Donna, we had two ladies on work experience – Sheila Comerford, from Roscrea Colaiste Phobal, worked with us on the volunteer-run After-School Club, while Wendy Hodgins on a student placement from LIT (Tipperary) also worked with the Forum.

Transition Year students from the local community college also help out at the After-School Club, with one doing so as part of An Gaisce Awards.

In January of this year, after a long wait, NTLP facilitated us in getting a TÚS worker. We got Pamela Burke - a wonderful local girl who has transformed our group. She brings with her a supply of stress busting and anger diffusing Mars Bars for the tea-break.

LOCAL TRAINING

We were able to offer family cookery classes and computer classes for beginners, in conjunction with the local VEC adult literacy co-ordinator, Liz Flannery. All were over-subscribed.

A personal finance course was run through the VEC's Life-Long Learning Centre with encouragement from local community college principal Matthew Carr and we've organised a beginners painting course and a quilting group through the local library.

NTLP funded specialised training to upskill our volunteers, including FETAC Level 5 in After School Childcare, Children First Child Protection, Resilience in the Community, and first aid.

Also this year, we held our first AGM and elected officers.

Long term, we hope to move into the town's disused former courthouse which could be used as a base for the Forum and for other local community groups.

E: borrisokanecommunityforum@hotmail.com

W: www.borrisokane.com

Borrisokane Community Forum is also on Facebook.

10,000 People In Self-Employment

STATS & FACTS

- With LCDP support, people last year opened businesses in the following sectors, to give but a few examples: retail (575); food and catering (341); transport (333); agriculture (180); childcare (56); and information technology (332).
- Between 1996 and 2012, LDCs and their predecessor companies assisted a total of 47,950 people to become self-employed.
- LDCs estimate that in 2012 they spent €4.956 million of LCDP funding on supporting people into self-employment.

10,700 UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE SET UP THEIR OWN JOBS

- And in turn created work for 700 more

ALLEN MEAGHER REPORTS:

Every working day, an average of 23 new jobs are being created through the Government's main community-level, social inclusion programme.

This is one of the unrivalled achievements of the Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) as highlighted in a new report by Pobal.

The 108-page 'Supporting Inclusion Through Self-Employment' shows that the LCDP offers virtually nationwide, start-to-finish support for unemployed people with good business ideas.

As a result, over the past two years, over 11,000 new jobs were created in Ireland by unemployed people with small enterprise ideas:

- 10,726 were created by people who set up small businesses;
- a further 717 jobs were created in turn by them for others.

Remarkably, two-thirds of the enterprises have got past the difficult first two years, the research demonstrates. Approximately 8,000 of the jobs remain in existence at the present time, many of the businesses are flourishing and new hopefuls are entering the marketplace every day.

The LCDP acted as the catalyst by uniquely targeting support at long-term unemployed

- The majority of LDCs (35) deliver self-employment supports through their own staff.
- It is not necessarily those LDCs with the largest LCDP allocations that employ the largest number of enterprise staff.
- The number of staff deployed to deliver self-employment supports ranges from 0.3 to 4.25 staff across LDCs.
- The report focused on one aspect of the work conducted under LCDP Goal 3 which seeks "to increase people's work readiness and employment prospects".

people and those "furthest removed from the labour market", among others.

Most of the LCDP-supported businesses are small, local operations, often sole-traders. The support is provided as a social inclusion measure by Local Development Companies (LDCs) which is what differentiates their work from that of Enterprise Ireland and City/County Enterprise Boards:

"CEBs generally do not focus on long-term unemployed people with vague or non-existent business ideas, while for the LDCs these clients are their target group."

Programme covers niche area "not covered by other agencies and organisations"

AIM IS NOT JOB CREATION, BUT SOCIAL INCLUSION

"The LCDP is not supporting LDCs to operate as job creation agencies," notes the report. It provides something that wasn't there before for the long-term unemployed during the 1980's recession.

"The LDCs currently occupy a particular

niche within the areas of social inclusion and self-employment, which is not covered by other agencies and organisations."

The LCDP work also saves the country money every time it supports someone, particularly from the second year onwards when the enterprise allowance payments are reduced.

The report was commissioned because "In the context of policy developments, Pobal considered it to be particularly timely to review the self-employment supports being provided through the LCDP."

FINDING 10,000 PEOPLE WITH GOOD BUSINESS IDEAS

Some of the successful business-people only had foggy notions when they first went to their LDC enquiring about courses, possibilities, advice or out of sheer desperation. They may have called enquiring about a computer course for instance.

However, after the LDCs weave their magic, people's outlook can brighten considerably and vague ideas can be developed into solid business propositions.

The freely available advice and support to guide unemployed people from start to finish as they go about setting up small businesses is available in virtually every part of the country through the LCDP.

OVER 30,000 MADE ENQUIRIES

10,000 People In Self-Employment

In the past two years, over 30,000 unemployed people sought information from LDCs about starting a business, with under half of them going further with their ideas.

A critical component to the self-starters' success was the further support provided to them by the Department of Social Protection which allows successful applicants to retain a payment that matches what they were getting on social welfare: 94% of people striving to enter self-employment availed of the Back To Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme or the Short Term Enterprise Allowance Scheme. The BTWEA lasts for two years, the STEA for less than that.

Pobal's report points out that, "significant saving to the State arises from those who remain in business beyond the first year."

IMPORTANCE OF BACK TO WORK ALLOWANCE

The report notes: "There are strong indications that the enterprise supports provided by the LDCs have played an important role in enabling businesses to survive beyond the period of the two year BTWEA 'safety net'."

However, as LDCs highlighted, "consideration" should be given to doing a cost-benefit analysis on extending the scheme for one more year (it was until recently a 4-year scheme) as this would "make a very significant difference" in encouraging more unemployed people to consider the self-employment option.

"On a value for money basis, the combination of LCDP supports and the BTWEA can be seen as providing good value to the State, in assisting individuals to move from being financially dependent to becoming positive contributors to the public purse," the report noted.

BENEFITS TO FAMILIES "CANNOT BE UNDERESTIMATED"

The other benefits – to families, the unemployed persons themselves and the positive role-models they become in communities also "should not be underestimated".

Supports are provided generally on a one-to-one tailored basis and they begin when the citizen is seeking general advice and continue through to when the business is trading (or otherwise).

It must be emphasised that the LCDP also supports unemployed people who, more conventionally, are seeking to become employees, who seek re-training in new skills, who need their confidence boosted and who may have personal development needs.

As one person told the researcher, "The LDC gave me great confidence and self-belief that I could make it. I had been unemployed for three years."

In 2012, the Programme spent €11.7 million supporting unemployed people (Goal 3) and almost €5 million of that went towards guiding long-term unemployed and socially excluded people into self-employment.

The report highlights areas for improvement, calls for a sharing of best practice and notes that delivery standards vary around the country.

Pobal manages or administers 18 programmes for six Government departments and European Union bodies.

The report is available for download as follows: <http://bit.ly/19GwIho>

HOLISTIC APPROACH SUITS DEALING WITH PEOPLE "AT A VERY LOW EBB"

Pobal's report noted that many long-term unemployed people "are at a very low ebb, are experiencing significant financial and emotional problems and some are suffering from anxiety and depression with a pessimistic view about their future lives (and) it is clear that they are seeking some hope and solace."

The LDCs therefore have a responsibility to: Be straight with the client (about whether they have what it takes).

Give an honest and dispassionate assessment of the business idea.

They may need to give a recommendation as to whether clients should be approved onto the BTWEA.

The report found that enterprise officers "have generally kept the right balance between

maintaining some hope and being realistic with the client".

As Breffni Integrated Development put it, "Enterprise Officers are well rounded in the area of community development, social awareness, outreach and have knowledge in other sectors such as social welfare payments, means testing, employment schemes etc."

"The capacity to deal with individuals at their own level... is what sets LDCs apart from other agencies and organisations," said the report, noting that LDCs adopt a holistic and whole person approach to their work.

As Roscommon Integrated Development explained it:

- They may have an enterprise idea which will lead nowhere, or may have a good idea but lack

the confidence to pursue it.

- Our role is to signpost them internally in our LDC company or to other agencies that could meet these needs.

- The core of the work undertaken with our clients who are LTU is developmental work. The majority are never ready to walk straight into a business start-up course.

"It comes back to our experience in looking at the person and not just the business idea," remarked an interviewee from **Southside Partnership in Dublin.**



The LCDP supported 4,378 community groups nationwide in 2012. Source: Pobal.



SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are among the recommendations in the report published by Pobal about the LCDP titled 'Supporting Inclusion Through Self-Employment':

There is a need to maintain a clear and unambiguous focus on long-term unemployed and other socially excluded target groups of the LCDP in any successor programme.

The report stressed the importance of communities retaining local accessibility.

Assistance with the BTWEA application and business planning processes is a key dimension

On displacement concerns, it says: "Greater consistency could be achieved through the development of national co-ordination and guidelines."

Given ongoing cuts, the report notes: "It is

necessary to have a minimum level of resources/ staff to make a self-employment support service practicable."

Convening a network of LCDP enterprise officers should also be considered, as a means to sharing information and models/examples of good practice (and providing) support and training for staff.

Long-term unemployed people should have a reasonable expectation of receiving a certain level/ standard of self-employment support from their closest LDC. (The standard of service varies from place to place).

COSTS AND VALUE FOR MONEY

There was a direct LCDP contribution of €1,134 per start-up, in addition to the funds spent by Government on BTWEA costs etc.

Some clients also received additional financial support for example, from the Rural Development Programme and County Enterprise Boards, while others have received technical assistance grants



from the Department of Social Protection.

Further training or mentoring supports may come through the VECs and FÁS which obviously increases the average cost per start-up.

However, the BTWEA does not add any additional cost to the exchequer in the first year (it replaces social welfare payments) and it ceases completely after the second year.

LDC's capacity to lever and to secure additional funding was particularly strong within some of the larger well-resourced LDCs which have a significant tradition and track record in the area of self-employment.

IRELAND'S BIG SECRET IS HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT AT LOCAL LEVEL

- Programme recognition may be an issue



The LCDP has a lot more under its bonnet than people realise.

Most people are unaware of the Local and Community Development Programme's role each year in helping thousands of long-term unemployed people. The programme needs a higher profile, says Pobal's report.

If so, it backs up the assertion that if you want to keep something a secret, the trick is to hide it in full view, because the LCDP is nationwide. However, with some exceptions, people generally only see or hear about the Programme's local impact. They know about the work of the Local Development Company in their area.

The lack of Programme awareness, Pobal's report concluded, even includes people in public service posts.

The report states:

- "There is relatively little institutional or public awareness and understanding that the LCDP/ LDCs are assisting many thousands of people each year to make the progression from welfare to work and from unemployment to self-employment."
- "There were numerous anecdotal examples during the research of senior officials from local authorities and other statutory agencies not (being) aware of the self-employment work and the achievements from the work of LDCs."
- "At an enterprise fair in one county, the County Manager remarked that he did not know the LDC had any involvement in supporting people into self-employment."
- "At the national level, it is striking that there are very few references in the Action Plan for Jobs to the role of LDCs in supporting long-term unemployed people into self-employment."
- "In a similar vein, a report produced by the County and City Managers Association in 2012... made no references to the self-employment supports of LDCs at a local/county level."
- "Many of those consulted during the research expressed disappointment and concern at the lack of recognition afforded to LDCs in relation to their contributions to job creation and employment growth."
- "There is little recognition or appreciation of these outcomes, and this places the work of LDCs in a vulnerable position, given the policy

and operational changes under consideration."

In the past year, 'Changing Ireland' directly reached over 15,000 readers in key public service and community sector positions. It won primetime radio and television coverage for the Programme's employment outcomes, reaching 500,000 others.

It is nonetheless of concern that Programme recognition remains a challenge in the current policy context.

The report states: "In the absence of LDCs, there are no other agencies or organisations at the national or regional levels providing a range of pre-enterprise supports to unemployed people, who may or may not have a business idea... The LDCs can work with people at an early stage, and go through a range of options with them, while enterprise agencies generally only begin working with people when they have a definite business idea and/or have made the decision to become self-employed."

It warns: "If the relevant stakeholders do not recognise or understand the work being carried out by LDCs, it is going to be difficult to convince them to fully maintain these supports in any new configuration or operational delivery arrangements which might be put in place. Hence there is a need to actively share and promote the self-employment achievements of the LCDP."

Despite the concerns expressed in the report, an official launch of the report has yet to take place.

ALLEN MEAGHER

JOBLESS WISH TO DO SOMETHING POSITIVE WITH THEIR LIVES



Paul Olden opened a painting and decorating supply business in Cork city with LCDP support.

Virtually all of the 10,000 "clients" who set up small businesses had been long-term unemployed. Amazingly, "a large number" (the report does not say how many) did not have a clear business

idea and had no definite idea about future work prospects, apart from knowing they wanted to do something positive with their lives.

It was only after meetings with staff that the self-employment option began to emerge.

The report found, "Some clients have more advanced business ideas, some are more confident, whilst some are more literate. LDCs are generally able to embrace all potential self-employment clients. Some have 1-2 meetings with LDC staff whilst other clients might need 5-6 meetings."

"A number of beneficiaries said that LDCs could deal with general, hazy and ill-thought out business ideas, whilst other agencies require a lot more precision and definition in relation to the business idea being proposed," said the report.

Citizens who participated were very pleased with the wide range of LDC supports, ranging from enterprise workshops, access to mentors and business advisors, access to funding and assistance with business plans.

They generally found the LDC supports to be accessible, person/client-centred, affordable

and relevant to their particular needs and circumstances.

Even after businesses ceased trading, "LDCs were helpful and supportive in enabling clients to consider other life/career options. LDCs have not been judgemental or negative," the report says.

One person told the researcher, "I found that the LDC was very helpful when my business failed and I was very despondent about life and about my future."

However, the impact of cutbacks was noted by people walking in off the street. It was pointed out to the researchers that "some LDCs seemed to be under more pressure due to a larger number of clients presenting for assistance and reduced staff numbers."

The report noted, for instance, that some LDCs have had to substitute one-to-one client meetings with group meetings with 10-12 people at a time.



WOMEN'S AID
Making Women and Children Safe

FREE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TRAINING FOR STAFF OF LOCAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND THE LCDP

Women's Aid is currently offering domestic violence training free of charge to local employment services and initiatives funded by the Local and Community Development Programme.

This one-day training will:

- provide an understanding of the challenges faced by women experiencing domestic violence.
- examine how domestic violence impacts women's ability to obtain and retain employment.
- provide the knowledge and skills to effectively respond to and refer women experiencing domestic violence.

Training for staff in employment services is essential as domestic violence affects 1 in 5 women in Ireland and responses women receive can have a huge



impact on their safety and ability to find and retain employment.

To enquire about training for your local employment service, please contact Michele Lam, Training and Development Project Leader at Women's Aid on 01 6788858 or michele.lam@womensaid.ie.

As Specialist Support Agency on Violence against Women to the LCDP, Women's Aid supports groups funded by the LCDP to address and respond to the issue of domestic violence in the community. Women's Aid is a leading national organisation that has been working to stop domestic violence against women and children in Ireland since 1974.

OFFICIALS AND SIPTU MEET OVER “ALIGNMENT”

- Over 1,000 including TDs sign petition

Minister for the Environment Phil Hogan was petitioned by over a thousand people to meet with SIPTU members to discuss their concerns over plans to align Local Development Companies with local authorities.

People are worried about their jobs and their community work.

While a meeting with Departmental officials and SIPTU representatives went ahead, the Minister did not attend.

Among the people who signed the petition were Government Junior Minister Joe Costello and a number of other Labour Party and Opposition TDs.

In the course of the campaign, many people expressed their views via the petition. Their concerns ranged from the lack of information to the perceived threat to jobs, structures for community engagement and the impact on communities. This selection of comments people made captures the sentiments:

Elaine McGrath, Longford: I've been working in this area for the past 14 years, I'm flexible and work overtime without getting paid for it. My pay was frozen five years ago and I've never complained or protested!

David Tuohy, Cork: Moving LEADER under the remit of the local authorities will significantly reduce transparency, the community-led ethos and the overall impact of the programme.

Orlaith Rowe, Wexford: The community and voluntary sector is the backbone of our society, our communities would fall apart without it... I've worked in the sector for the past 13 years, I see it all first-hand.

Patrick McGee, Roscrea, Co. Tipperary: I work in administration in an LDC company... This funding should not be used as a bribe to keep local town councillors sweet over the fact that their UDCs are being abolished.

Brendan O'Keeffe, Limerick (academic): So much expertise will be lost if alignment goes ahead as proposed.

Theresa McGouran, Dublin: I'm a



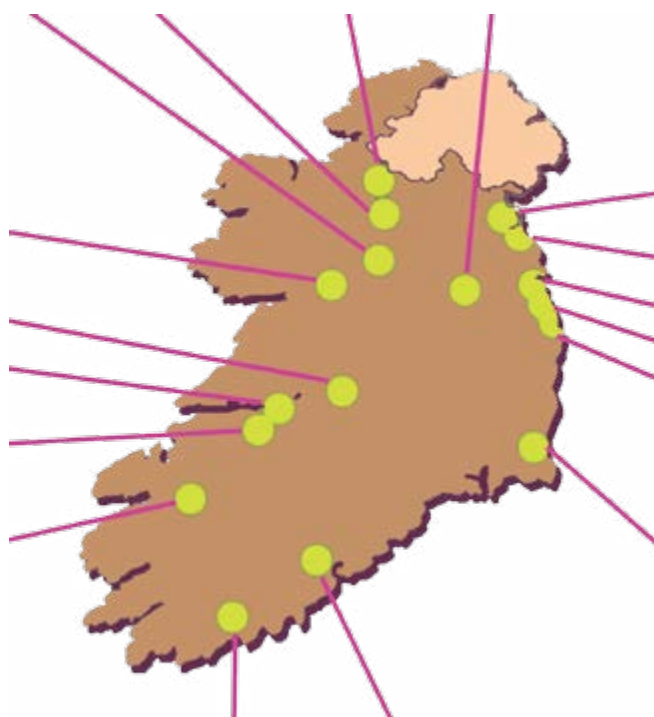
Community Employment supervisor for the last 17 years; have I no job tomorrow?

Chelo Alfonso, Loughrea, Co. Galway:

Local authorities are often at odds with their own communities, trying to control people with their own rules rather than consulting them.

Kevin Santry, Cork: I have 13 years experience (and) we never once failed in delivering a project and all whom we worked with in the past will acknowledge this. If the LEADER Programme is administered by the council, you can say good-bye to Rural Ireland. Ask the people who live in these areas.

Miriam Steward, Galway: No cost analysis has been done on alternative methods of delivery.



if community workers are ignored.

Eamonn O'Reilly, Tralee, Co. Kerry:

Community Led Local Development must be facilitated and supported by government, not controlled and governed by local authority.

Brian Smyth, Co. Leitrim: We have been very effective in reaching people and communities on behalf of a number of Departments which have been unable to engage people.

Paul Hansard, Dublin: The voice of workers should be heard and engaged in this process as would be the case in a true democracy.

Trish Martin, Dublin: I'm a youth worker in the inner city and have seen youth work funding getting less and less but the young people need youth services more and more.

Mary-Ann McGlynn, Drogheda,

Co. Louth: These workers deserve recognition for years of dedicated service to disadvantaged people and communities.

Proinsias De Rossa, Dublin

(former MEP): The invaluable role played by community workers in providing community supports and services... has to be taken into account in any reorganization.

Brenda Heath, Limerick: This is my job and my future. I work to provide for my home & family. Do I not have a right to know if I will be able to do that from the end of this year? Minister Hogan... please extend me the courtesy of being honest and truthful about your intentions for the future of our LDCs

Ann Maher, Dublin: Both myself and my husband are on Community Employment Schemes.

Keith Nolan, Birmingham, England: The Irish government have lost the respect and the support of the voting public. Their submission to the neo-liberal ideals of the IMF and The EU is at the cost of Irish Society and our social services. This must be stopped.

Inga Kawalek, Siupsk, Poland: We have implemented Leader approach in Poland learning from our Irish friends (Duhallow IRD). Their successful work serves as a model for us. Their effort should be appreciated and needs continuation.

Tina Begley, Rosscarbery, Co. Cork: Has any serious case been made on behalf of Local Authorities about their capacity or competence to deliver community programmes? Let's have that debate.

Kevin Kelly, Naas, Co. Kildare: I fear for the future due to lack of information.

John Burns, Co. Roscommon: I studied Community and Youth Work at University. I live in a rural community, where isolation and low income is an everyday factor in people's lives. Grass root issues and voices can easily go unheard

HEALY HEADS UP NEW CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT GROUP

- Group to report to Minister Hogan within weeks



Fr Sean Healy

A new working group on improving community engagement between local authorities and communities nationwide has been established by community minister Phil Hogan.

The group met for the first time on September 26th and is due to report back to the minister by the end of November.

They will make recommendations on how to increase citizen input into decision-making at local government level.

The group is chaired by Fr Sean Healy (Social Justice Ireland) and has representation from civil society, local authorities and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.

"Citizen engagement is a greatly important issue for Ireland," said Fr Healy. "In fact, it's not possible to run an effective democracy in the 21st century without substantial engagement with citizens."

"One of the challenges facing our society is to ensure such engagement is real. It must be effective and done in a two-way process and generate outcomes that are positive across a

range of factors, including social inclusion and sustainable development," he said.

Joining Fr Healy on the group are:
Seamus Boland, CEO Irish Rural Link and chairperson of Pobal;

Michael Ewing, Environmental Pillar Co-ordinator;

Liam Keane, Pobal board member;

Deirdre Garvey, CEO, The Wheel;

Sinead Carr, Director of Services, South Tipperary County Council;

Sean McLaughlin, DECLG;

Robin Hanan, Community Platform and EAPN.

The setting up of the working group follows on from the adoption late last year of 'Putting People First' as the new government strategy for reforming local government.

"It is imperative that we put citizens at the heart of everything we do at local government level," said Minister Hogan. "This working group will explore all the options on how we might enhance citizen engagement."

He said that PPF saw the need for local

authorities to "build strong relationships with and gain the interest of local people and to provide for better engagement with citizens."

"The commitments set out in 'Putting People First' on citizen engagement, and the overall scope of the reforms, are deep and wide."

Ideas to be explored under the terms of reference for the group include participatory budgeting, petitioning, plebiscites, and town hall meetings.

"Given this, it would be important that citizen engagement is addressed not just as an 'add-on' to a new community-focussed role for local government, but also addresses core areas such as promoting higher voter turnout at elections, issues around local services, budgeting, local charges," he said.

There is – to some consternation in some quarters – no councillor in the group.

More information:
<http://bit.ly/1hwpivH>

GREAT EXPECTATIONS IN A SHORT TIMEFRAME

The following are the terms of reference, the expectations and the guidelines that define the area the working group on community engagement is to examine. The group was set up recently to examine how to improve community engagement between local authorities and communities that share territory.

TERMS

The terms of reference state that it should make recommendations that provide for:

- More extensive and diverse input by citizens into the decision-making process at local government level.
- Facilitation of input by citizens into decision making at local government level.

EXPECTATIONS

The group is expected in a short few weeks to accomplish the following:

- Recommend a participatory mechanism for citizens in the new local government structures,

that will ensure:

Citizen input into decision making and propose clear and transparent structures for the selection of representatives and accountability of representatives to their wider communities and groups. They must name the resources, tools and mechanisms to enable this infrastructure to be established and developed. They must identify what resources are needed to support communities of interest to actively participate, and:

- Outline a comprehensive capacity building programme for citizen engagement to include possible joint arrangements between citizens and relevant stakeholders.

- Consider further the application and implementation of options in 'Putting People First' including "Participatory Budgeting, Petition Rights, Plebiscites and Town or Area meetings."
- Devise and outline mechanisms to ensure the engagement of the most disadvantaged.

- Identify ways to strengthen and enhance local authority relationships with local groups.

- Propose ways of addressing barriers to participation.

- Outline the role of technology, and in particular social media, in citizen engagement.

- Actively inform the guidance to be prepared by DECLG for local authorities on proposed approaches to citizen engagement. In this context provide guidance on how the Local Government Reform legislation could provide for local authorities to draft Citizens Charters to outline how they will facilitate better engagement with their citizens.

FEEDBACK

To ensure the community engagement is successful, the group must do the following:

- Propose a spectrum for on-going feedback on citizen engagement.

- Outline ways to measure and evaluate citizen feedback.

- To ensure accountability of representatives to their wider communities and groups, propose a mechanism for monitoring and supporting citizen participation in local government.



THE BANNER RISING

Clare Local Development Company (CLDC) celebrated 21 years of community-led development in the county in May. 'The Banner Rising' event in Ennis featured over 150 exhibition stands which included community groups, local enterprises and various local projects.

"At a time when the future of community-led development is under threat in Ireland, it is important for people to realise just how much has been achieved in Clare since 1992," said CLDC chairperson Stephen Walsh.

He added that up to 1,000 jobs had been created, 500 small businesses had been grant aided and 3,000 people had received training in that time.

Investment from public, private and community funding in the county over that period is estimated to be in excess of €86 million.

Guest speakers included Fr. Harry Bohan, a pioneer of community-led development in Ireland, ex-rugby player Keith Wood, Dr. Brendan O'Keefe of UL and Trea Heapes of Loop Head Tourism.

NEW BOOK ON SUPPORTING MEN

A new book published by the Men's Development Network and entitled 'Supporting Men Through Challenging Times' aims to help men engage, develop, contribute and affect policy for the improvement of their own lives and of

those around them.

Harry Ferguson, Professor of Social Care at Nottingham University, England, said the book was "essential reading for all men and women who want to come to understand men and gender relations better and an invaluable guide to all those whose work involves challenging and supporting men to change."

The book, part-funded by Atlantic

Philanthropies and written by Alan O'Neill, is available from www.mens-network.net, priced €20



YOUTH WORKERS GET NEW ONLINE RESOURCE

A new online resource for youth workers should make their work easier, more rewarding



and more effective.

The 'Route Map' as it's called makes available "an array of web-based information which is international in scope. All the resources have been assessed and selected based on their quality and capacity to inform and support youth workers."

The resource was developed by the Centre for Effective Services. Check it out for yourself through the website: www.effectiveservices.org.

FEWER COLLEGE DROP-OUTS DUE TO LIMERICK CDP - Project impact on city outlined



Jennifer McMahon of UL officially launched Limerick City CDP's annual report.

Limerick City Community Development Project (LCCDP) launched its annual report for 2012 in June and the report's statistics underpin positive changes in people's lives.

For instance, the project dispersed 166 bursaries* to third level students from Moyross, Southill, Our Lady of Lourdes, St. Mary's and St. Munchin's.

"We know first hand, that due to delays with the (third level) grant system, the provision of funding by the CDP for registration, books and materials was vital for students to take up their places in third level," said manager Juan Carlos Azzopardi.

The report was launched by the project's new independent chairperson, Jennifer McMahon from UL.

Notable achievements included:

- Over 40 community groups were supported to develop and deliver area-based services and participate in fora that influence policy development in the city.

- Over 5,500 homes received local newsletters and service directories.
- 1,000 residents took part in three community festivals organised to celebrate community pride and spirit.
- 450 people attended information sessions on health, drugs and adult education.
- 55 people took part in FETAC Major Awards;
- 11 people completed a Personal Empowerment Programme (to increase their work readiness and employment prospects).
- 15 students, volunteers and participants on Jobsbridge and TUS placements received valuable work experience.
- Drugs education and prevention is a major part of the LCCDP's work and drugs education workers reached over 1,800 young people.

The project took a 13% cut to its budget last year. Its mission is to support and provide access to training, information, education and employment opportunities so as to improve the quality of life of individuals and communities experiencing social and economic disadvantage.

It works closely with the LCDP-funded PAUL Partnership.

For more information,

T: 061 328690.

E: limerickcitycdp@gmail.ie

W: www.limerickcitycdp.com

100 ATTEND KERRY DEBT SEMINAR - Turnout shows stigma is declining

ROBERT CAREY REPORTS

Advising people on how to handle debts and mortgage arrears is not the usual stomping ground for local development companies. However, the issue is having such an impact on communities and individuals that North East Kerry Development (NEKD) decided to call in experts to give people proper advice.

It organised a seminar and over one hundred people attended on a sunny evening in July to hear from David Hall of the Irish Mortgage Holders Association.

He remarked from the outset that the turnout and level of engagement showed that the stigma around debt was being broken down.

The high level of interest was also partly due to changes in the law whereby under new guidelines banks are now more active about contacting customers over their arrears.

David said customers now had to engage,

but he encouraged people to get advice and not to take calls under pressure.

While you have to engage with the banks, you are entitled to do so when you have adequate time and space, because giving responses under pressure is generally not the best strategy.

The audience also heard about an instance where banks were calling directly to homeowners in relation to payments and that it was important to put all key communication in written form.

All the speakers encouraged customers to get advice.

Michael Bolger from Grant Thornton Debt Solutions went over the new personal insolvency process which may be prompting banks to seek other deals outside the process, for example split mortgages.

Feedback on the night was that the seminar gave people confidence to make a start on the



David Hall

problem, although more information on the personal insolvency process would be welcome, because it's complex and people were unclear as to whether or not it was a good option.

People indicated that they would like more legal advice, financial advice and to join discussion groups.

NEKD indicated on the night that a follow-up session was likely.

* Robert Carey is LCDP manager with NEKD.

DISAPPOINTMENT, THEN DELIGHT FOR EQUALITY WOMEN - The Equality for Women Measure in Listowel, Castleisland and Tralee



Members of the North Kerry Equality for Women group made a presentation to President Higgins and his wife Sabina in July in a case of second-time lucky. Catherine Shanahan crafted the gift.

Grace Kelly told 'Changing Ireland' the story:

The Equality for Women Measure has been making a positive difference in women's lives in Castleisland, Listowel and Tralee since 2010.

In Kerry as in other parts of the country, the group runs classes, workshops, seminars and group meetings.

to visit Áras an Uachtarán for the awards ceremony.

So, group member and artist Catherine Shanahan crafted a pair of hand-carved, marble book-ends featuring a harp and a heron. However, President Higgins was unable to attend and the presentation never took place.

Undeterred, co-ordinator Dee Keogh wrote a letter and - lo and behold - the group was invited back and at a garden party, on July 8th, President Higgins was finally presented with the beautiful gift from Kerry.

To the group's delight, it has since been placed on public view in the Áras library.

Meanwhile, it's back to business for the group in Kerry with a stream of new courses beginning this September that will run into the Springtime.

POSITIVE ACTION PROGRAMME

The EU-funded Equality for Women Measure is "a positive action programme" for women that aims to advance their role in the Irish economy and in decision making at all levels.

On the ground, that means providing opportunities in everything from personal development courses to training in skills that would be useful in seeking employment.

The Equality group is on Facebook (type in 'Equality For Women Measure Group N.E.K.D').

T: 068-23429.

E: deekeogh@nekd.ie or gracekelly@nekd.ie

RETROFIT THE COUNTRY AND WE'LL SAVE €3BILLION ANNUALLY

- Tipperary communities have proven it can work (and creates work)

BY ALLAN STEWART*

POLITICAL AND INDUSTRIAL CONTEXT

The pressure is on communities in the West, Midlands and South Dublin to put up with gas pipelines, windfarms, gas-fracking operations and oil-drilling. Corporations profit while the benefit to communities is debatable and there are obvious environmental issues. Yet, there is another way to tackle the energy challenge, one which receives little attention since it's not a threat to the environment, benefits whole communities and could reduce demand for fossil fuels (hardly something drilling companies wish to see happen). This alternative approach has backing from the Government and other communities could follow Tipp's lead.



Energy team volunteer Con Harrington, NTLP's social programmes manager Michelle Putti, TEA's Michael Bell, community energy officer Marcella Maher, and energy team volunteer Martin O'Donoghue.

"A year down the line, ye'll be wondering why ye didn't start this sooner."

The country pays out €6 billion annually for fossil fuel imports, yet communities in Co. Tipperary are uniquely demonstrating how we could halve that bill and create employment:

When active members of Drombane and Upperchurch in North Tipperary got together in 2011 to discuss economic solutions for their community, they considered many ideas - from wind farms to a local ski slope. After further meetings and talks with the Tipperary Energy Agency (TEA) and North Tipperary Leader Partnership (NTLP) they decided on a community retrofit scheme. This would convert many of the homes in the area to high energy performance homes that were warmer, save on household bills, while creating work in the locality.

COMPLETELY NEW TO THE IDEA

A local 'Energy Team' was formed to co-ordinate a cluster of home-owners, apply for grants from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and select contractors for the work. Completely new to the idea, it took many meetings and support from the local development company, NTLP, to get up and running and to get enough locals interested.

And it's worked!

Last year, 22 homes were upgraded and this year 35 more homes and two community halls will be retrofitted. Currently, the 400 households in Drombane and Upperchurch spend €1,000,000 on home energy and once the whole community is retrofitted, the energy team expects it will save householders a total of over €250,000 per year (25%).

NTLP TO REPEAT THE WORK

Now that a locally-run model is up and running, NTLP seek to spread the word and repeat the work, focusing initially on two

communities (Lorrha and Kilcommon).**

As Drombane/Upperchurch Energy Team member Martin O'Donoghue put it at a recent presentation in Lorrha, "A year down the line, ye'll be wondering why ye didn't start this sooner."

According to local community worker Gearóid Fitzgibbon, "The projects demonstrate the employment and financial benefits of local insulation schemes. Imagine these savings and jobs multiplied out to every community in Ireland."

He said that if other communities were to follow the lead shown by Drombane/Upperchurch and if we were to all change our energy use habits, then communities around Ireland "could cut their energy bills in half."

GREEN ECONOMY ALIVE

Under the SEAI Better Energy Communities Scheme, communities can even sell the energy savings they achieve. Drombane/Upperchurch Energy Team has agreed a deal with Electric Ireland for 2013. This local 'eco-money' will be used for further energy projects in the community, with the overall aim of becoming more energy independent.

The Celtic Tiger is dead, but Ireland's communities still have the opportunity to build the foundations for a leading green economy.

For more info, email: gfitzgibbon@ntlp.ie or allandstewart@gmail.com

Note: By increasing awareness of energy usage, households can save over 30% on their energy bills, eg by turning the television off fully, having showers instead of baths, and hanging clothes on the line instead of tumble-drying. More info:

www.energyneighbourhoods.eu/en_ie

*Allan Stewart was on work placement with NTLP from the Rural Development and Natural Resource Masters Programme at Uppsala University, Sweden.

**Lorrha and Kilcommon communities were identified for support in NTLP's LCDP 2011 strategic plan.



SEVEN STEPS TO RETROFIT HEAVEN

1. Communicate and convene.
2. Find suitably skilled Energy Co-ordinator
3. Form a local energy cluster.
4. Assess homes.
5. Secure funding for homes.
6. Co-ordinate contractors.
7. Oversee work to completion.



100% ENERGY GRANTS AVAILABLE TO COMMUNITIES

The Better Energy Communities Scheme run by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland offers 35% to 100% grants to home-owners who opt into a community retrofit scheme. Community owned building and businesses are also eligible (50% grants).

If your community sets up a scheme, it will:

- cut waiting time for grants,
- allow for better quality assurance,
- reduce costs,
- create an SEAI-funded job for the co-ordinator of your project.

FURTHER INFORMATION

www.changingireland.ie (for earlier coverage)
www.facebook.com/DUenergy
www.bit.ly/tippenrg
www.bit.ly/duetenergy
 For data on Ireland's CO2 reduction targets, see: <http://bit.ly/15AHXDW>



MAYO WINDFARMS AND THE COMMUNITY APPROACH

In Erris, Co. Mayo, after all the years of conflict with Shell, a windfarm promoter is ensuring he respects the community before proceeding.

Skibbereen-based Organic Power Ltd, which needs co-operation from landowners to erect 400 wind turbines, says it has consulted widely with the community and local groups.

"We set up a subsidiary company (called Erris Community Wind) and 10 percent of the equity is being offered to members of the community to invest in at €1,000 per share," said CEO Maurice McCarthy.

He said the windfarm could create thousands of jobs and he hopes that "as many members of the community as possible" will become shareholders in the company.

Meanwhile, Ballina-based TD, Michelle Mulherin is supporting a campaign that there be a community dividend from windfarms in the Crossmolina area. Deputy Mulherin said €1,000 per megawatt installed per annum was too small a contribution to the community fund. She also called on the ESB and Bord na Mona to engage in proper consultation: "It has to be more than just handing out information."

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Zen and the Art of Local Development



Photo: Brian Meagher

Robert Carey had a Zen moment over the summer that allowed him to see beyond “the seemingly endless paper shuffle” that community workers now face. Some of the real people represented in LCDP data reports took to a stage and told how the programme had empowered them to transform their lives.

BY ROBERT CAREY *

Anyone who read Robert Pirsig's best selling cult book (most likely in their younger years) 'Zen and The Art Of Motorcycle Maintenance' and claimed they understood every word could most kindly be accused of being self-deluded.

It was possible however for us mere mortals to glean the essence of some very important concepts. One of these, which was the tension between an empirical approach to life and a more qualitative approach, resonates highly for people today across a range of sectors, not least for those working in local development.

Our work is now dominated by outputs, indicators, logic models, audits, accounting, etc.

“Our work is now dominated by outputs, indicators, logic models, audits, accounting, etc.”

This is not to deny the importance of numbers, accounting and systems. They provide necessary structure within which the core work can be carried out and they can also contribute to value for money and in the case of numerical reports for example inform future work.

The importance of finding the correct balance however was illustrated for me at the AGM last week of the company in which I work:

The core portion of the meeting was presentations from those who had been beneficiaries of, and partners in North and East Kerry Developments community development work. Two women who had been supported under a women's strategy funded at various points under both the LCDP and 'Equality for Women Measure' shared their

“The people behind the statistics... stepped onstage”

experiences; the support had helped them to change their lives.

For one it was the catalyst to progress from a situation where she was contending with a marriage break-up, a son having issues in school, unemployment and low self-esteem. She and her family have since been transformed by the programme.

Another lady was becoming isolated in the home having had a child and again suffering an erosion of confidence. She found the friendship and support from the group instilled her with confidence and has since been offered a job.

Finally, we heard from a social enterprise run by people with disabilities which was presented

by a member of the group who charmed the audience with her passion for the project and sales patter.

The financial report given was positive and its importance is not underestimated, but the meaning of the work and the reason for the organisation's existence was put to the forefront. This was an important reminder to staff and board members alike about what lies behind the seemingly endless paper shuffle.

At a variety of levels in Ireland there is a fundamentalism about money, auditing and numbers. Ironically despite the ugly demise of the Celtic Tiger, there is still a focus on the price of everything and value of nothing approach, all be it in with different motivational spectre, not caused by status anxiety as previously but that of austerity, and now there is a new spectre in the form of alignment.

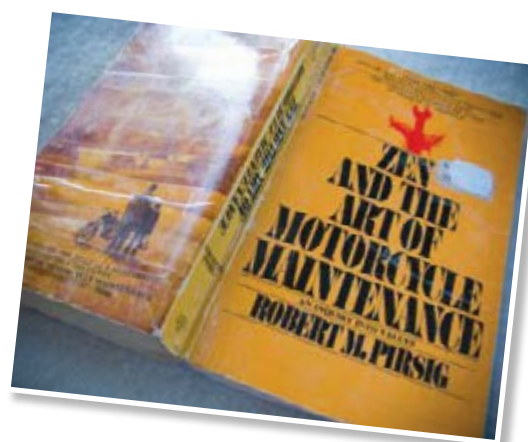
The balance is skewed and it will impact on people's lives and the ability to find creative and

imaginative solutions to social issues. As Pirsig says, “To live only for some future goal is shallow. It's the sides of the mountain that sustain life, not the top.”

In other words, it's what happens in between that really counts.

* Robert Carey is LCDP manager with North and East Kerry Development.

“She was contending with a marriage break-up, a son having issues in school, unemployment and low self-esteem. She and her family have since been transformed by the programme.”



Be wary of markets, boards and sharp elbows, Wheel conference told

Excellent speakers attended The Wheel's conference during the summer, among them Martyn Evans, Mary Murphy and Brendan Halligan,

REPORTS ALLEN MEAGHER.

Company boards were identified as the greatest barrier to advocacy work, co-operation is the way forward (no surprise) and we've to be wary of the market and “sharp-elbowed people”.

Martyn Evans, CEO of the Carnegie UK Trust noted that the average life expectancy of Irish males had risen greatly in the past 100 years (from 53 to 79 years) and the current social system appeared to have served us well.

We're all healthier, wealthier, wiser, and certainly better educated. But income inequality in Ireland has changed very little, he noted. For example, 10% of children leave school unable to read.

While there have been massive improvements, they have been differentially distributed which is a sign of “system failure”.

One outcome, he said, was that less than 50% of people across Europe have trust in their governments, according to the OECD.

Martyn proposed “an enabling state”, which is not one where things are done for people, but where actions take place with people, they are co-produced, meaning that users and producers of services work together.

He also proposed that where the State has failed, it should engage in community solutions.

Complex social challenges, he said, cannot be resolved by one sector alone, only by co-operation

between sectors.

Mary Murphy from NUI Maynooth spoke about a vision for a new republic and pleaded for us “to put care on the agenda, from our elders to our ecosystem.”

“We don't know what it means to be citizens in a republic,” she said. She told a story about being on holidays in France and seeing their republic's values

believed that change probably will not come from the political system and through political parties.

“It's up to us and to force it on the political system, we've to be political actors as well. Change if it is to come will come from below not from above,” she said.

She also spoke to the audience about our need to



Speaker Mary Murphy expressed hope, amidst warnings.

set in stone outside local schools. She admitted she could not name the values in our Irish republic.

“In one way, it seems there's a lot of change, with the ‘pencil revolution’ knocking Fianna Fail out of power. But it's shifting back,” she warned.

She criticised our deference to power and called on us to “rethink the market and what we allow it do to our society”.

Market practices were being brought into the third sector: “Some are good, some are questionable.” She criticised attacks on public goods, services, expenditure, accountability, academia and solidarity.

The “defunding and disinvestment” by the State in the Community and Voluntary Sector was a major issue and people were busy defending their patches, rather than pulling together as a sector.

“We shouldn't be ‘sluggish in the doldrums of what happens’ as Seamus Heaney put it,” she said.

While she felt there was “a poverty of ideas of political vision for Ireland”, she equally

“take environmental responsibilities seriously”. As we listened, the air-conditioning whirled overhead and the windows that might have allowed a breeze to enter were shut tight.

Other speakers provided enlightening moments and insight.

A conference attendee working with a Local Development Company in Mayo noted that the trend was towards centralization and communities were contesting the State over territory.

She said, “Fat wallets and sharp elbowed people will take advantage of the new relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector.

She also talked of an “information deficit disorder, whereby great reports are produced but nothing happens.”

Guest speaker Brendan Halligan called for the appointment of a junior minister for community and voluntary affairs in the Department of the Taoiseach.

Speaker Mary Cunningham noted the following:

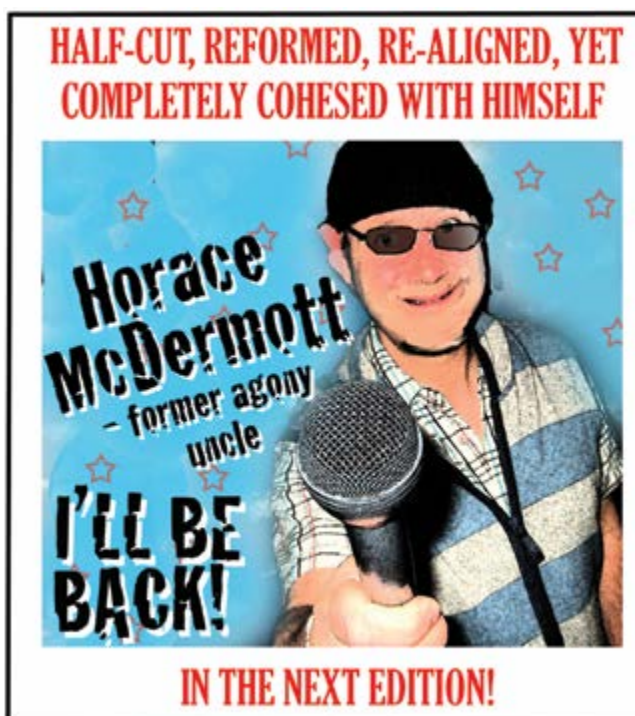
- 60% of the Sector's income from the State.

- 11% of d Sector's income comes from private donations.

- One-third of Community and Voluntary Sector organisations do not fundraise through the public.

And finally, we had Tim Delaney from the USA.

In a powerful presentation, he asked why it was that voluntary boards of management were largely responsible for organisations holding off on engaging in advocacy work.



YOUNG PEOPLE ACT TO END BULLYING

- Issue a top priority, says Comhairle na nÓg



Young people around the country have come up with their own initiatives to promote positive mental health and deal with bullying.

Youth delegates from Comhairle na nÓg presented both issues as top priorities at a national showcase of their work attended by over 500 of their peers, last November.

Other issues identified as priorities were improving facilities for young people and addressing sexual health needs.

The showcase event, held in Croke Park, was the first in Comhairle na nÓg's history and was attended by Taoiseach Enda Kenny and Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Frances Fitzgerald.

Young people were able to show they have launched a range of initiatives, including a mobile phone app promoting positive mental health, an initiative to tackle cyber-bullying, mentoring programmes in schools, positive body image campaigns, school anti-bullying weeks, a

project to combating homophobic bullying and a mapping of mental health services. Comhairle na nÓg is also influencing local and national policy and the development of educational and other programmes.

Minister Fitzgerald said, "For almost 10 years my Department has worked closely with the Local Authorities to bring the 34 Comhairle na nÓg to where they are today. The result of this hard work is that Comhairle na nÓg are now a vibrant and respected forum for voice of children and young people locally. Local politicians, policy makers and service providers know what Comhairle na nÓg can do and many have experienced the benefits of working directly with them as a consultative and participative forum."

"The Government is committed to ensuring that young people's voices are heard. It makes sense," she said.

Meanwhile, Dáil na nÓg 2013 is due to be held on Friday, November 15th, in Croke Park, Dublin.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs funds Dáil na nÓg and oversees the event in conjunction with Foróige and Youth Work Ireland.

8 BIG WINS BY YOUNG PEOPLE

- Influence on national policy up due to Comhairle na nÓg



Some extremely important wins have been achieved by young people from Comhairle na nÓg's national executive and through successive Dáil na nÓg Councils.

These young people have linked with adult decision-makers and brought to public attention issues of importance to the lives of young people. Their achievements include the following actions: Held a presentation this year entitled 'Your Comhairle Needs You', highlighting the ways in which TDs and Senators should work with and support their local Comhairle na nÓg.

Conducted a peer-led, evidenced based survey among 2,500 teenagers on body image. The Body Image Survey Report was launched last October. Consulted young people on reform of the Junior

Cert Cycle in secondary schools, in partnership with the DCYA and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. The findings were included in reform framework plans (2011). Comhairle na nÓg proved, following a survey, that there was a "very low level" of teaching about relationships and sexual health in secondary schools. The survey led to a detailed report titled 'Life skills matter – not just points' (2010). Until recently, questions about young people's sexual behaviour were excluded from a regular national survey (called the Health Behaviour of School-going Children Survey). Comhairle na nÓg got a commitment in 2010 that questions on sexual behaviour would be asked in future. Influenced the Minister for Health and Children's decision to commence the cervical cancer vaccine programme for 12 year-old girls (2010). Helped in devising the 'boy with the hoodie' youth mental health advertisement and awareness campaign (2008-2009) which was rolled out by the National Office for Suicide Prevention. Campaigned nationwide to convince media organisations to "talk to teenagers rather than talking about teenagers". The 'Hearsay' campaign (2007- 2008) was a response to the negative portrayal of teenagers in the media.

DEFINITION COMHAIRLE NA NÓG

Comhairle na nÓg are local child and youth councils that give a voice to people under the age of 18 years in the development of local services and policies. They initiative emerged from the National Children's Strategy (2000) and resulted the setting up of 34 groups nationwide involving over 500 young people at any one time.

Because the groups are supported through local authorities and agencies working on their behalf and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs at national level, they are well positioned to influence adult decision-making bodies.

Young people involved in Comhairle na nÓg seek out the views of their peers, carry out surveys and research, organise meetings, including with decision-makers, produce leaflets, posters and online material and so on. Their work is driven by the desire to give children and young people a say in the local and national policy-making.

W: www.comhairlenanog.ie

ASYLUM SEEKERS TAKE COURT ACTION OVER DIRECT PROVISION

A family of six has taken a High Court challenge against the Government's direct provision scheme under which asylum-seekers are provided with accommodation and a small weekly allowance while their applications are being processed. The processing of applications, with no guarantee of a satisfactory outcome, can take up to ten years. The family – from Africa – has been living under direct provision for over four years. They argue that direct provision violates their rights to private and family life under the Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights.



STEP INTO MY SHOES!

- Irish limbo: No weekends, work, holidays or privacy

We asked a former asylum-seeker to tell our readers what it's like living in a direct provision centre. They recently acquired refugee status and moved into normal accommodation. The writer (who has availed of a number of courses run by their local development company) put themselves in the shoes of an ordinary Irish person looking in from outside:

There is no doubt we Irish pride ourselves on being humanitarian; that we like to give to help people outside the country who are in need. Charity giving is part of our history but how do we treat those people who fled their oppressive governments and have come to us for protection?

That is a different thing.

Like many Irish I live close to an asylum hostel in my city. I have seen some of the adults hanging around the shopping mall. It never occurred to me to find out about their living situation; not until I met and visited two women of my age who are seeking asylum here.

"To the outside world Ireland is a country that champions human rights."

I was utterly shocked at their living conditions. I never thought of seeing such a situation in my country where two adult women with babies could share

a room for more than three years; and where some single ones have shared a room for eight years. I visited a family of six who had been living in a room of our standard bedroom size for seven years. All the children were born in Ireland. But they have not been allowed to become Irish citizens. The parents, though well educated, were not allowed to work, nor permitted to cook for themselves.

Like everyone in the hostel, the family I met have been queuing up for food in the dining hall for seven years. As a mother of three children, I enjoy my children watching me cooking. It is a natural learning process for future adults. My children, like most others, decide what they want to eat.

In some hostels, asylum seekers must sign in each day. They are not allowed to visit friends or travel for Christmas or holidays within Ireland. Even when this is allowed there is no finance for the trip. Lack of finance means most asylum seek parents have to avoid weekend outings with their children.

"The parents, though well educated, were not allowed to work, nor permitted to cook."

Through my visits I discovered Ireland's limbo camp, an area like an open prison for the very people we ought to protect. To the outside world Ireland is a country that champions human rights, especially the rights of children. Yet, next door to

me is an open prison for children, parents and helpless singles who languish in the asylum hostels. I then realised why some of them take to hanging around the mall; the situation they find themselves in has depressed and demoralised them. The asylum seeker parents have no room for being a model for their children.

I believe that protecting children's rights is more important than any political or economic considerations that have caused people living in Ireland to be placed in this inhumane situation.



RESTORING HOPE – REFUGEES SHOW HOW IT’S DONE!

“Many of these young people have experienced extreme hardship and have showed courage and determination in settling in Ireland and carving out a positive future for themselves,” Marie Carroll, CEO of Southside Partnership, told 150 people on June 17th. The event she spoke at marked the ninth occasion that Dun Laoghaire participated in World Refugee Day and the theme of “Restoring Hope” was chosen to demonstrate that while a refugee’s journey begins with danger, it also begins with hope. Camaraderie, friendship and joy was

evident everywhere during the full day of music and storytelling. Marie expressed particular gratitude to the people of Dún Laoghaire Refugee Project “who have provided educational and emotional support to the many young people who arrived in Dún Laoghaire without family over the last ten years.” Chairperson of Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, Cllr. Carrie Smyth, officially opened the event, saying: “It’s important to take the time to recognise that, across the globe, many young people and children, due to conflict, torture and other circumstances, must flee their own

country... leaving behind all that is familiar to them and seek refuge in new places with customs, traditions and languages differing from their own.” Each year, the event highlights the positive contribution of young asylum seekers and refugees and all four organisers are looking forward to celebrating next year’s 10th World Refugee Day. The organisers were Southside Partnership, Dún Laoghaire Refugee Project, Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council and Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art Design & Technology (which provided the venue).



“Many young people and children, due to conflict, torture and other circumstances, must flee their own country.”

“They showed courage and determination in settling in Ireland and carving out a positive future for themselves.”

“MEN TAKING OVERDOSES, BUYING THE ROPE, THE WHOLE LOT.” - Pavee Point in leaflet launch



(L-R) Nellie Collins, Bridgid Nevin, Martin Rogan and Julie Howley at the leaflet launch at Pavee Point. Photo by Derek Speirs.

among Travellers was six times the national average and accounted for 11% of all Traveller deaths,” said Ronnie Fay of Pavee Point.

The study also found, unsurprisingly, that exclusion, social stigma and discrimination had a negative impact on Travellers’ mental health.

This year, at the launch of two informational leaflets for Travellers on July 25th, Brigid Nevin, primary health care co-ordinator with TRavAct in Coolock, Dublin, remarked: “I was horrified to hear of a 12 year old Traveller boy attempting suicide because of constant bullying in school. I felt Traveller parents needed to be given information on how to handle the issue.”

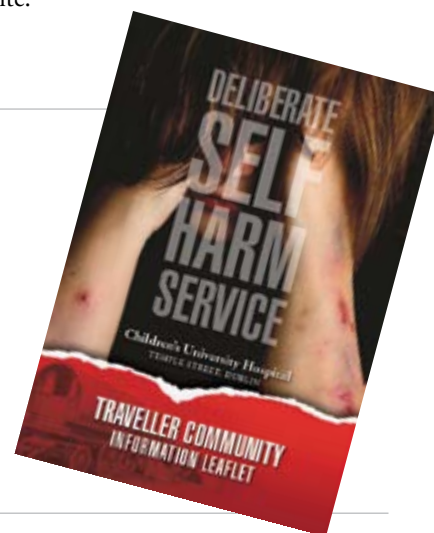
The leaflet about Deliberate Self-Harm is most relevant to people in the catchment area of Temple Street Hospital,

Dublin, although the general advice in the leaflet “is of national relevance”, says Pavee Point. Hard copies can be posted out to any project nationwide and both leaflets (the second explains how to deal with bullying) are also available online at www.paveepoint.ie They were prepared in collaboration with Temple Street Children’s Hospital and the HSE.

The information leaflets aim to promote health and well-being, counter bullying, overcome barriers to accessing mainstream mental health services. They also push for culturally appropriate mental health services.

At the launch, Ronnie Fay highlighted the importance of collaboration between Traveller Primary Health Care Projects and Specialist Mental Health Services in this critical work.

For more information, contact Pavee Point on 01-8780255 or visit their website.



DELIBERATE SELF-HARM – A RESPONSE

A mental health team in Temple Street Children’s Hospital in Dublin offers special support to young people under 16 who go to casualty with thoughts of or acts of self-

harm. Parents also receive ongoing support from the team.

Similar schemes run in some other parts of the country. The advice from Pavee Point is to contact your local GP who should be able to set up an urgent appointment. Deliberate Self-Harm is defined as when someone injures or harms themselves on purpose, for example by taking an overdose, cutting themselves or attempting hanging.

TRAINING FOLK WHO MEET STRESSED FARMERS

A rural-based local development company is preparing to support stressed-out farmers this winter.

After the all-island Springtime fodder crisis, farmers face another difficult season and in response, training is being provided in one county for every kind

of professional who meets farmers regularly.

The idea is to ensure that everyone from milk collectors to vets to development workers are sufficiently prepared to help when they encounter a farmer suffering chronic stress or depression.

The approach was rolled out in Co. Kerry previously and proved successful.



The cattle fodder crisis caused a lot of hardship for farming families earlier this year.

A DONEGAL PRESCRIPTION FOR HEALTHIER RURAL COMMUNITIES

BY MARTIN MCBRIDE*

Martin McBride is a voluntary board member of Donegal Local Development Company and secretary of North Donegal Community Network. He writes: World Suicide Prevention Day took place worldwide on September 10th and North Donegal Community Network (NDCN) was thinking ahead. It held an event earlier this year titled ‘A Prescription for Healthier Rural Communities’ in the Ozanam Centre, Dunfanaghy, Co. Donegal. The village was deliberately chosen.

The NCDN saw that addiction, mental health and suicide are more important issues than ever within rural communities with the recession, austerity, household charges and so on putting more pressure on people than ever before.

We wanted solutions as there have been many suicides in County Donegal in the last few years and Dunfanaghy is a small rural village that has seen many of them.

The event focused on the well-being of rural families and farming communities and we

looked at contributing factors to suicide - mental health, addiction, stress, depression and suicide itself.

We brought together speakers from community and statutory organisations – both national and local - that provide guidance to people.

The IFA’s leaflet ‘Let’s Talk, Dealing with Stress’ explains causes of stress and how to cope. Margaret Healy, national chairperson of the IFA’s Farm Families and Social Affairs Committee, said it was important that farmers learned to manage stress because it can increase the risk of farm accidents. Farmers today, she said, faced many challenges – isolation, uncertain prices, environmental regulations, unpredictable weather, long working hours and shortage of fodder.

Margaret said the IFA committee members had received training from Pieta House and the IFA were partners in ‘See Change’, an initiative of over 70 organisations working to end the stigma of mental health.

Given the reluctance of people to talk about the issue within rural areas, Margaret welcomed NDCN’s prioritising of mental health.

Maria Whelan of GROW spoke about their peer support model which aims to empower and activate people who have shared experiences whilst providing a friendship and support network for people who have experienced a breakdown.

Ciaran Austin of national suicide charity Console said his organisation provides free professional 24 hour suicide prevention and bereavement counselling via a freephone helpline (1800-201-890).

Bill Vaughan of Mental Health Ireland spoke about how excessive drinking can set off emotional or mental problems that were not apparent previously.

Angela Maguire of De Exeter House Therapeutic Care Centre located in Termon, Co. Donegal, outlined their specialisation in treating addiction and depression and providing counselling, recovery supports and respite.

She said that in past generations, character was more important than knowledge of finance and technology. She suggested communities should adopt a strategy of endeavour, self-sustainability and she stressed the importance of communities working in co-operation. The private sector, statutory organisations and the Community Sector should work in partnership on the issue.

The Irish Hospice Foundation choose the event to launch its ‘Think Ahead’ initiative in Donegal.

The event was funded by Donegal Local Development Company under the Local and Community Development Programme. It followed earlier informational events organised by NDCN covering topics such as women’s health and family carers.



Ciaran Austin of Console speaking.

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Note: First preference for coverage goes to workers/volunteers in projects supported through the LCDP. Letters also welcome. Contact editor Allen Meagher. E: editor@changingireland.ie T: 061-458011. M: 086-8591676.

“THEY’RE TRYING TO RESCUE CHILDREN FROM... WANTING TO BE GUNMEN”

- Dubs meet fellow community activists in Belfast

Community activists from Dublin attended bonfires on July 12th in Belfast as part of a North-South initiative.

A delegation travelled from northside Dublin to Belfast as part of a ‘Connect 4’ programme to take a closer look at the annual bonfire and parading traditions of the loyalist / unionist communities on July 11th and 12th.

The visit was supported by, among others, the Northside Partnership, a company that is part-funded through the LCDP. At national level, the Programme seeks to enhance all-island co-operation, which is one of its key “cross-cutting policy themes”.

On their visit, the group got an insight into the joint efforts by communities in interface areas to ease tensions and curb violence. The learning went beyond what anyone could expect from following news reports and the group documented their visit in video diaries. Andrew Montague noted that both communities shared issues over bonfires. Marian McKenna who works and lives in a Traveller community could easily relate to the suspicion on both sides.

Anita Whelan saw community organisations coming together in Belfast to a greater extent than they do in the Republic.

Here’s what they said:

“Meeting Jackie and John Harry from the UDA was really interesting. I felt they were



**Ciaran Murray, co-ordinator
Near FM Co-op:**

very genuine community activists. They’re working very hard on the ground to try and change the celebration of Protestantism to make it non-sectarian, for example by removing the burning of tricolours from it. That was very brave, optimistic as well.”



**Cllr Andrew Montague,
Ballymun resident:**

“The community leaders were inspirational. In many cases, the bonfires are built next to a nationalist community. But community leaders do positive work and try to move them back from the interface, even if it’s just ten or 20 feet.”



**Terry Montague,
Whitehall resident, Dublin:**

“They were trying to rescue children from themselves, from the evil of wanting to be gunmen. I was delighted with their efforts and (they were) doing it not by the boot, but by persuasion. The UDA were very sincere.”



**Marian McKenna, drugs worker,
Priorswood Outreach Centre:**

“I was surprised. A lot has changed. It was sombre, subdued and colourful, but it was a bit depressing too, that people come and watch these bands and that’s it.



**Anita Whelan, programme manager,
Doras Bui (Parents Alone Resource
Centre):**

“I didn’t realise how much work they are doing to bring about change around these dates, July 11th and 12th, and how much community workers give personally as well as through their work. They want things to change. ...A lot of the community groups (in the ROI) don’t come together... They’re worried about their own funding and survival. And yet the importance of coming together can be hugely effective.”

The Connect 4 programme aims to create real and long-lasting partnerships between like-minded organisations in North Belfast and North Dublin. The programme is run jointly by Northside Partnership and Groundwork Northern Ireland.
T: 01-8485630.
W: www.northsidepartnership.ie

AWARD FOR TIPP “SUPER-HUMAN” ACTIVIST



Martin Quinn leads Malala Yousafzai into the hall to receive her peace prize.

The man who welcomed Malala Yousafzai to Tipperary has himself been hailed a hero.

Volunteer Martin Quinn, current chairperson of South Tipperary Development Company, was described as “super-human” when he was awarded the title ‘Tipperary Person of the Year’ at a gala event in Dublin earlier this year.

Martin has volunteered with the a host of local, community and sporting bodies, including youth clubs, a community radio station, parish councils, mental health bodies and many others.

“Martin also got involved with mental health

issues to help prevent rural suicides. He is a super human who has done himself, his parish, community and county proud”, said Tipperary Association president Liam Myles.

Accepting the award, the Tipperary Town man remarked: “I won’t change the world on my own but I would like people to work with me to bring about change.”

He paid tribute to his parents for instilling in him the philosophy that drives him: Better to light a candle than curse the darkness.

He was chosen for the award not only “for a

lifetime of voluntary service” but also for his role in promoting the Tipperary International Peace Convention which “sets him above most, if not all, other community activists.”

Award winner Martin Quinn with colleagues from South Tipperary Development Company of which he is chairman.

In August, Martin presented the Tipperary peace award to 16-year-old education rights



Award winner Martin Quinn with colleagues from South Tipperary Development Company of which he is chairman.

activist Malala Yousafzai who continues to speak fearlessly despite a Taliban attempt on her life last year. Martin said the attack only served to “amplify” her message.

IRISH MEN CAMPAIGN TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

“If it were between countries, we’d call it a war. If it were a disease, we’d call it an epidemic. If it were an oil spill, we’d call it a disaster. But it’s happening to women and it’s just an everyday affair.”

So said keynote speaker Dr Michael Kaufman when addressing a conference in Dublin earlier this year on how to respond to men’s violence against women.

The International Conference on the White Ribbon Campaign in Ireland aimed to demonstrate how to take a sustained and robust multi-agency approach to ending men’s violence against women.

Michael is one of the co-founders of the White Ribbon Campaign, he has worked in 45 countries and has devised “an optimistic pathway for women and men to work together to end the violence.”

The conference was a follow-up to the launch in 2010 of the national White Ribbon Campaign in Ireland by ‘The Other Half’ comprising Safe Ireland, the Rape Crisis Network of Ireland and the Men’s Development Network (MDN).

The MDN, which is part-LCDP-funded, organised the conference and is the national promoter of the White Ribbon Campaign in Ireland.

MDN has over the past 16 years established itself as a leading voice on men’s development in Ireland and abroad. The network runs men’s programmes in development, health, violence intervention, counselling, equality and equity for men.

“MDN will be promoting the White Ribbon campaign again with events in November,” said Alan O’Neill, CEO, “to mark the 16 days of Action Against Violence



Dr. Michael Kaufman

in support at whiteribbon.ie and request a white ribbon to wear from MDN.”

More info:

T: 051-844260.

E: men@mens-network.net

W: www.mens-network.net,

www.theotherhalf.ie

www.whiteribbon.ie





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"The Personal & Public Cost of Domestic Violence"

A conference organised by West Cork Women Against Violence

Thursday 21st November, 2013.
Maritime Hotel, Bantry, Co. Cork

Speakers include:

- Dr. Kylee Trevillion, Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London;
- Nata Duvvury, Political Science & Sociology, NUI Galway;
- Jane Ruffino, domestic violence survivor & journalist;
- Annie Campbell, Director, Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation;
- Margaret Costello, National Lead for Domestic, Sexual and Gender based Violence, Children and Family Services.

Also a special appearance by:

Dublin Hip Hop Artist, MsElayneous and West Cork Rappers performing a specially commissioned Rap on Domestic Violence.

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Check www.westcorkwomensproject.ie for up to date information.

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