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Spring 2014

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CHANGING IRELAND

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"THERE'S TALENT IN EVERY COMMUNITY ...GO FIND IT!"

PHILLY MCMAHON

ALSO INSIDE:

Angry, Young & Jobless
Vivien's Call to Action



Newcomer's Best
Hurling Photo Ever



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Going to Public Tender



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The North Beach, Inishbofin, Co. Galway - 1st Feb



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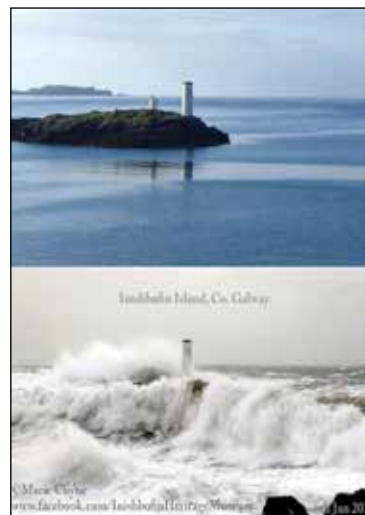
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COVER PHOTO: Philip McMahon, Dublin, in action against David Moran of Kerry in the Allianz Football League Division 1, Round 1 game in Croke Park, Dublin, on Feb. 1st. Photo: Brendan Moran/SPORTSFILE.

FRONT & ABOVE: Inishbofin pics courtesy Marie Coyne: www.facebook.com/InishbofinHeritageMuseum. King's Island flooded hallway, courtesy Diane Ryan.

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 Programme is being continued on a temporary basis at present while a successor programme is being put in place.

DARRAGH CLIFFORD-CRONIN, JOURNALIST

Darragh Clifford-Cronin from Cratloe, Co. Clare, was on work placement for a fortnight in February with 'Changing Ireland'.

He carried out interviews on King's Island that contributed to our coverage on pages 13-16.

He also filmed there and his video reports from King's Island can be viewed on 'Changing Ireland's Youtube Channel.

Darragh also conducted an interview with the manager of Athlone Community Radio (page 24).

He is a student of Limerick College of Further Education.



Could the private sector bring something new to community work?



Dublin All-Ireland footballer and GAA star Philly McMahon is a young man who inspires while at the same time calling for more.

He has called on community groups nationwide to

do more to unearth and encourage the talent in their areas.

He is a businessman and someone who instills in others a sense of purpose, motivation and hope, according to participants on a course run by Philly and the Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership.

He is but one of hundreds of thousands of people who volunteer in their communities every year.

What makes Philly different is his sporting celebrity status and his tremendous work ethic.

Yet, he has not sought to profit from his endeavours. The exemplary leadership and community engagement exhibited

by hundreds of thousands of community volunteers stands in stark contrast with the behaviour of those who have dragged the so-called Community & Voluntary Sector into disrepute.

The existence of a “poverty industry” is epitomised by the salary payments by Rehab and by the company’s approach to lobbying. By contrast, most people working in social inclusion work, community work and related fields have experienced cuts to funding and to salaries (which are not high to start with).

While the media spotlight is focused on the Community & Voluntary Sector, it is only beginning to shine light on a recent announcement by Government of its intention to allow contracts for community work to be open to public tender.

The move has been condemned by the Irish Local Development Network and SIPTU representing workers, among others.

Could the private sector help rehabilitate communities in ways that community groups cannot manage at present? One imagines the Government must believe so.

In the USA, private companies run prisons profitably. Prisoners must pay for phone calls, etc. Why should the State pay, the argument goes.

This publication will provide fair and balanced coverage and offer a forum for debating the issues. Keep an eye on our news blog (via our website) in the coming months. At the same time, it is widely accepted that profit-making from community work runs contrary to the principles that underpin community development since it takes community ownership away.

That doesn’t mean there is not value in opening the gates to private sector companies. But a heck of a lot of people and communities nationwide remain to be convinced.

Coming hot on the heels of the furore over salary payments by Rehab, one wonders about the wisdom of inviting private companies to contribute to our country’s community infrastructure.

Allen Meagher

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 an LCDP-funded project (check our website). Alternatively, tell us something novel about your community that others could learn from. Contact details above.



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[MADE IN MOYROSS]

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.

FUTURE STATE-SUPPORT

LOCAL & COMMUNITY DEV'T GOING OUT TO PUBLIC TENDER

Commercial, for-profit companies will be able to tender for contracts to deliver community work nationwide from 2015

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

The Government plans to put out for public tendering the delivery of work under the social inclusion programme to follow the Local and Community Development Programme.

It means Oxfam could tender for the work, or indeed Denis O'Brien, Richard Branson or any private, profit-making company.

Phil Hogan, Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, speaking in the Dail recently, said that, from next year, the successor programme to the Local and Community Development Programme will be overseen and managed by Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) of the Local Authorities who will request tenders for its delivery in their areas.

"The competitive process will be open to Local Development Companies, other not-for-profit community groups in general and commercial firms that can provide the services to be tendered for, to deliver the new Programme."

"The new Programme will reflect the main findings of the LCDP Mid-Term



Review and ensure that it remains a locally accessible, frontline intervention for the people most difficult to reach in terms of preparation for employment," he said.

Earlier, LDCs had been informed that "the Department sought the advice of the Attorney General in relation to whether

LCDCs would have to procure the delivery of the new Programme through a procurement process."

In the Seanad, Kathryn Reilly (SF) spoke for many when she said she had received correspondence from two local development companies that were "very concerned about what the future held."

A COMMUNITY WORKER'S VIEW ON PRIVATISATION

There is a realisation that tendering has the potential to shut down Local Development Companies (LDCs) and it sounds like the death knell for community development as we understand it, **WRITES ROBERT CAREY.**

Numerous questions arise as a result of this move by the Government such as:

Will it lead to thousands of job losses?
Will it help achieve Government policy aims (in so far as we know what they are)?
Most importantly, how will it impact on communities and the most vulnerable?

If the Local Development Sector is

dismantled, it may be more difficult for Government to get the local activation it requires to implement social inclusion policies on the ground.

Also given the controversy around the charity sector and the so called hybrid model of private companies who get public money, the LDC sector is one which has been highly controlled and is accountable to the Government in its present format.

Remember, LDCs were set up by communities and people are not just clients - they are members of the same community.

Community development is about people and social interventions that can be transformational. All companies will attest to people who have told them their lives have been changed for the better.

Some are predicated that if the worst case scenario happens then communities will develop similar structures again in the future, but there will be regression in the meantime.

Robert Carey works for North East Kerry Development.

TRADE UNION VIEW

"The current situation is that people employed by LDCs do not know for how much longer they will have their jobs and the Government are refusing to answer some basic questions and talk to the workers about their concerns," said Darragh O'Connor, SIPTU national organiser for the Community Sector.

"This is clearly not just about the LCDP and Rural Development programmes, there is an agenda here to privatise a

range of community services and the Jobspath is a signal of that and we would see it as being a threat to the Local Employment Services.

"It is still not clear what changed between the roll out of the 2007 LCDP programme and the upcoming one to necessitate it going out to tender and we would feel that it goes against the ethos of community development which will never put people before profit.

"SIPTU have commenced a campaign on behalf of its members which will lead to the Labour Relations Commission whereby the Department (as well as the LDCs) will be requested to sit down with workers and discuss the issues of concern to them," he said.

He said the union and its members will also mount a public campaign.

Darragh O'Connor was interviewed by Robert Carey.

WORK PLACEMENTS

NEWCOMER SHOOTS 'BEST HURLING PHOTO EVER'

- OUT-OF-WORK CARPENTER NOW ACE PHOTOGRAPHER

A sports photograph described as "possibly the best hurling photo ever" (to quote Gaascore.ie) was taken by a newcomer to professional photography, Tony Grehan, a former carpenter.

The photo might never have come to pass and Tony might still be sitting at home only for Jobbridge. Aware the scheme is viewed by many as suspect, he however found it "a very positive experience" and would encourage others to try it.

"Jobbridge worked for me," he said. "It helped me turn my hobby into a career."

After the recession, Tony was unemployed for five years, during which time he took up photography as a hobby. He applied for a Jobbridge internship with Press 22; the



All concentration: Tony at work.

agency was impressed and retained him on a contract basis.

This year, when his hurling snap went viral, he found himself at the centre of a media frenzy with broadcasters lining up to interview the modest father-of-three. Prior to this, he had produced work that graced the front and back pages of local and national newspapers.

"I couldn't believe the hurley didn't break over Cathal McNamara's head. Luckily, he was wearing a helmet. They gave him a rub of the magic sponge, he was up again after two minutes and on his way."

Currently, Tony is mid-way through an LCDP-backed scheme that supports approximately 5,000 people into self-employment each year. It allows mini-entrepreneurs retain partial social welfare payments for the first two years while setting up in business and the scheme is run in his area by Ballyhoura Development.

"I'm only on a part-time contract with Press 22 and need to expand," said Tony. Brimming with plans, he is one of the first photographers in Ireland to experiment with a drone-camera, a remote-controlled camera carried by a micro-helicopter.

Covering the Mid-West, Tony focuses on everything from community events to weddings, sports and news.



Limerick's Cathal McNamara takes a rap from Clare's Nicky O'Connell.

Copyright: Tony Grehan Photography.


JobBridge

National Internship Scheme

Tony Grehan's Facebook page: <http://on.fb.me/ORu142>

More info on Jobbridge: www.jobbridge.ie

Ballymun's Kaizen challenge

BALLYMUN PARTNERSHIP TAKE THE ALL-STAR APPROACH

- Philly McMahon & Ballymun Whitehall Partnership reach new people

BY ROBERT MCNAMARA

The ancient philosophy of continuous improvement both physical and mental is the inspiration behind a revamped educational 'Work-Taster Programme' in Ballymun.

Called 'Kaizen Evolution', with 'Kai-zen' meaning 'good-change' or 'continuous improvement' in Japanese, it targeted 18-24 year olds.

The FETAC Level 4 Course in Health Related Fitness and Customer Care was overseen by enterprise development officer Gerard McLoughlin of Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership and local football legend Philly McMahon.

Between September and December, participants learned CV and interview skills, studied sports psychology and completed a 30-hour 'Strength & Conditioning Programme' tailored and delivered by Philly McMahon. They also took up four-week work placements in a local gym.

Unique to the programme was the involvement of a 'local champion', Philly, a local employer who owns three gyms in the area. A two-time All-Ireland winner with Dublin, he plays with Ballymun Kickhams football team and is the strength and conditioning coach for Ireland's most successful soccer team, Shamrock Rovers.

"The 'local champion' aspect was great, said Gerard. "Philly knew people and their relatives and we reached into areas of Ballymun that we couldn't before."

The GAA star was instrumental in



ABOVE: Kaizen programme participants on-site. Sport can transform people and communities and can be used as a tool for community development. BELOW: The new Ballymun, pop 22,000, the same size as Sligo.

designing the physical and business elements of the programme.

He covered health and fitness and the business of working in the industry," said Gerard.

"He felt that because his business has been supported to such an extent that he wanted to give back to the community and we bought into that. We got value from his status in the community as a high achiever, so it was a two-way process," he said.

LCDP Goal 3 underpinned the course:

"The participants can go onto further education, employment or self-employment. That avenue is open to them and, as enterprise development officer, I can help them in that journey."

Gerard said local business-owners got behind the course and the work-taster programme.

The LCDP provided 20% of the funding required, the Department of Social Protection providing 75% and the rest was made up with contributions by local businesses.

Gerard hopes the programme will be repeated in the future.

"It's easily replicated. Get the local heroes in there and let them tell the participants what they achieved through adversity."



Ballymun's Kaizen challenge



IT GAVE US “THE DRIVE AND PASSION”

- Still seeking work, but we're fit, confident & taking up opportunities

ROBERT MCNAMARA REPORTS

Participants of 'Kaizen Evolution' are fitter, motivated, more confident and ready to take on the next challenge.

At least three of the 13 graduates from 'Kaizen Evolution' are moving onto further education with Coláiste Íde College of Further Education in Finglas and two have secured Jobbridge placements in a local youth facility.

Sean Martin (24) and Lisa Keenan (23), both from Shangan, and Sinead Neary (20) from Poppintree thrived on the programme and are set to move on to the next step in their education.

Speaking at Philly McMahon's BK Gym in Ballymun where the strength and conditioning element of the programme was held, the course graduates are boisterous, confident and determined to carve out long-lasting careers in the health and fitness industry. They respond with deadly seriousness when asked about their futures.

"None of us were working or in anything," said Sean when summing up what they were doing before the programme came along. "and we jumped at the opportunity."

"There's not many opportunities around here," said Sinead. "It's too expensive to go to college and after I finished secondary school I went to Australia for a year. When I came home, I knew I needed to get a better qualification behind me. I knew Philly and when I heard what he was doing with the course, I thought 'that appeals to me'."

The course was three-fold as it helped participants think about their physical and mental health, while also providing practical employment skills and relevant work experience.

"I'm more positive. I got a job in Dunnes and I wouldn't have got it without the customer service training," said Sinead Neary (20)

"I'm a lot fitter," said Lisa. "I wouldn't have known what to do before in the gym, but now I do and I go all the time. I love coming here."

For Sinead, employment opportunities have become more accessible following the programme.

"It helped me a lot. I had interviews before and I was walking in and out and I knew I needed practice. Now going into interviews, I'm a more positive person. I got a job in Dunnes Stores over Christmas and I don't think I would have got it without the customer service training or the CV skills."

"Our CVs are amazing now," added Lisa. "We've added so many skills to them".

For Sean, the work experience and return to education has motivated him.

"I did work experience in DCU and I absolutely loved it. It was tough in the classroom, because we were all a few years out of school, so it was hard to get back into it, concentrating and taking notes. I'd like to go further in education and follow Philly's lead."

Lisa and Sinead were excited about learning more about

Coláiste Íde at its open day: "We're going to head down and see what we can do," said Sinead.

Sean's 'Kaizen Evolution' was "all enjoyable" and he wanted to thank Philly and the Partnership for giving them "the drive and passion".

"We're more motivated, more confident," he said. "No-one would talk at the start of the course, but, by the end, we were flying through it and teaching each other."



Sinead Neary from Poppintree

Ballymun's Kaizen challenge

CROKER STAR CALLS ON ALL COMMUNITIES TO TAP THEIR TALENT

"There are Olympians in our schools, we just don't know them yet." - Philly McMahon

ROBERT MCNAMARA REPORTS

Philly McMahon is from Sillogue. He knows the area, its needs and its potential.

"There's massive potential in any area, no matter what the social aspect is," he said.

"It's about working on that potential. There are Olympians in our schools, we just don't know them yet. It's about giving that talent access to programmes, about having something there to push them forward. There's so much talent in Ballymun."

It's not all about nurturing elites as far as the two-time All-Ireland winner is concerned.

"I spoke to the participants about their goals in life and it's not about having the best job in the world," said Philly. "It's about being happy and that's what we tried to get with the group."

While the programme was aimed at those who are considering a career in the health and fitness sector, Philly didn't mind if people went on to work in

other areas. "It was important that they were happy and that they achieve their full potential," he said.

Philly was able to relate to the students because he was once in a similar position to them.

"I grew up in Ballymun and there wasn't anything like this when I was a kid."

"When I left school I went to Coláiste Íde to keep my parents happy. I wasn't one for looking for Leaving Cert points or looking to go on to further education so Coláiste Íde was a kind of stepping stone for me. After that, I realised I did want to further my education, so I repeated my Leaving Cert and went onto DCU from there."

Developing strong mental health skills was important: "We wanted the participants to not only have a good practical experience but to improve throughout the course mentally as well. Constant improvement is something we tried to explain to the participants



Philly McMahon with participants Sean Martin (24), the course seriously, yet had fun along the way.

when they came in."

Philly was joined by another prominent Irish sportsman on graduation day.

"Bernard Dunne came in for the presentation and he hit the nail on the head when he said that it's about going out and trying things and failure is not a bad thing. It makes you stronger and

Rob's "foreign 'culchie' accent" stirs some curiosity in

Robert McNamara visited Ballymun for the first time with 'Changing Ireland', to see how the LCDP is complementing physical regeneration in the area by encouraging social and economic regeneration:

We needed to get to know the locals first, he writes:

The day 'Changing Ireland' came to town, the rain was teeming down and the wind chill would send shivers down anyone's spine. The people, however, were warm, welcoming, articulate and engaging.

Poverty, drugs and alienation are all words firmly associated with this Northside suburb, but when you examine the area's sporting success through Ballymun Kickhams GAA and Ballymun United's celebrated junior and schoolboy football teams, you could add the words talent, motivation and sportsmanship to

that list. The vacant units in the local shopping centre are adorned with memories of those clubs' past and present glories.

It was here, in one of the few occupied units, that I sought shelter from the rain. Tír na nÓg coffee shop offered some hot tea and respite from the weather. Just metres from the Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership, the clientele and staff were friendly and eager to greet this weary and wet stranger.

Clearly a hub for chat and activity, I was met with much curiosity, due to my foreign "culchie" accent: "Where are you from?", "What are you doing here?", "You're a journalist?", "Give us a good write up will ya?"



Many of the people I chatted to were long-term unemployed and not by choice. Some baulked at the lack of employment and education opportunities available in the area but revealed a determination to not let it get them down.

"What can you do only get on with it and do your best?" said one.

Opinion / News

GOVERNMENT CAN'T
ABOLISH COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT!

BY BRIAN DILLON



Can the Government abolish Community Development? This is an interesting question, in the sense that community development

did not originate as a government initiative in the first instance.

It came out of people being convinced that building up capacities and creating the potential for full participation was necessary if we truly aspired to an inclusive and balanced society. So much so that community activists in the 1980s 'did' community development in what could be described as an underground, or even subversive way.

Skill lay in accessing resources from State programmes (the SIS Scheme was a good example for anyone that remembers it) by making the right proposals and filling in the forms "correctly" when reporting on activities.

RECOGNISED

At that time, community development was being done in the background. However, it was subsequently recognised and legitimised:

- as locally-based projects successfully made the case for more sustainable funding,
- as these funded projects went on to push for a community development programme, and,
- as third level institutes even began to offer professional qualifications in community development.

Is it now reasonable enough to argue that we have come full-circle? Will those who have been involved in the really important work of building inclusion now find a way to re-focus within a service delivery model? Or will other ways be found to build on local strengths to at least tackle the worst effects of Government

policy?

However unclear the outcome in this respect, there is clarity in respect of the inherent contradictions at the heart of current government policy:

□. A well-developed and effective community development infrastructure is the result of investments over two decades. It makes no economic sense for the State to tear this apart now – especially as the entrenched inequalities being steadily developed will eventually require a reconstruction of the same infrastructure.

ASPIRATIONS

2. The Government has stated aspirations towards 'civic engagement' and 'active citizenship'. How? Using what mechanism? The policy goals are admirable, but the unavoidable result of policy initiatives will be civic engagement for some, complete disengagement for others, and passive citizenship for all.

3. Limiting policy to short-term fixes and reactions has definitely closed debate on the long-term economic consequences of dismantling community development.

Inequality certainly comes at a cost, but few want to think about counting it right now!

Brian Dillon is a community worker and researcher employed through the LCDP with Tipperary Rural Travellers Project.



Sinead Neary (20) and Lisa Keenan (23) who took
Photo by R McNamara.

it makes you want to continue on and achieve more."

"Winning an All-Ireland is great, but it's the journey along the way I'll always remember," said the Dublin left-corner back.

"Similarly with the participants, they'll have their memories from the course rather than just the graduation day."

Ballymun

Regeneration has changed the landscape in Ballymun and old apartment blocks battle for the skyline with rows of smart new buildings. Just across the road from Tír na nÓg is a shiny new building that houses a theatre and a swish restaurant that is in sharp contrast to the run-down and neglected shopping centre.

Perhaps that contrast informs the town's personality, as among the urban anomalies there is a wealth of unleashed potential. This talent is ready to be harvested for the benefit of the immediate community and the rest of the country. It's programmes like the LCDP-supported 'Kaizen Evolution' that are facilitating that.

Many here have triumphed through adversity like Philly McMahon, but so many more would take the opportunity if there were more programmes geared towards further education and employment.

Community Development principles:

- PARTICIPATION
- COLLECTIVE ACTION
- COMMUNITY VOICE
- INCLUSION
- IDENTIFYING LOCAL NEEDS
- MANDATED ACTION
- EMPOWERMENT
- ACCOUNTABILITY
- CHANGE

LOCAL FOCUS - BRAY, CO. WICKLOW

WOULD YOU WEAR A ONESIE TO WORK?



OF COURSE YOU WOULD!

Children from Bray Area Partnership's community pre-school, Fun Dayz, celebrating the service's fifth birthday and National Pyjama Day with with manager Teresa Grant (l) and assistant manager Elizabeth Frawley (r). They joined 40,000 children and staff nationally who took part in National Pyjama Day on March 7th.

Bray joins in as 40,000 celebrate National Pyjama Day

Fifty-four children from Fun Dayz Community Childcare joined 40,000 children nationwide by wearing their favourite pyjamas into preschool to mark National Pyjama Day, on 7th March.

The national event - in aid of the Irish Hospice Foundation Homecare for Children Programme - has grown in popularity and, through sponsorship of pyjamas-wearers, it raised €209,000 last year for the hospice. In total, almost €2 million has been raised.

Pyjama Day is run by Early Childhood Ireland, whose members in pre-schools and childcare services nationwide

support over 110,000 young children and their families.

In Bray, the children and staff were also celebrating the fifth birthday of Fun Dayz.

The Quinsboro Road-based service is run by Bray Area Partnership, who set it up five years ago as a community pre-school after another preschool on the site closed after many years.

Fun Dayz manager Teresa Grant said they offer morning and afternoon sessions and it is designed to be "an affordable quality service for the local community."

Speed-dating style forum to lobby TDs

Bray Area Partnership (BAP) has taken an unique approach to lobbying TDs by setting a speed-dating style forum for older people to discuss issues quickly with a group of TDs from different parties at one time.

The "TDs Forum" on 31st March uses a rotating 'speed lobby' format, whereby five groups of older people will get to meet each of their local TDs for 20-minute sessions to discuss the issues that affect their lives and what

can be done about them.

Older people, carers and people who provide services to older people were invited to attend.

The "TDs Forum" is being organised in collaboration with a group of local people aged over 50 who took part in the recent Community Effects active citizenship course run by BAP.

For more info, contact BAP's Eileen Byrnes. T: 01-2868266.



Older people in Bray at a meeting last November.

LOCAL FOCUS - BRAY, CO. WICKLOW

TOWN TAKES WHOLE-COMMUNITY APPROACH TO PROMOTING POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH

- Over 100 locals learn value of listening to young people

MICHELLE ROGERS REPORTS

Over 100 people in Co. Wicklow took part in youth mental health workshops recently, as part of an on-going effort to make Bray a town with a whole-of-community approach to promoting positive youth mental health.

Bray is the biggest urban area in the country, excluding the cities.

The week of events included an inspirational talk that described the building blocks of mental health, the 'five a day' to promote positive mental health and the value of listening as a way to support young people.

Two one-day workshops on 'Understanding Youth Mental Health' were also held for those working with young people locally. The workshops explored the factors influencing mental health, issues affecting young people, warning signs of mental health difficulties and help-seeking patterns among young people. Participants ranged from teachers and youth leaders, to workers and volunteers in local community centres and sports clubs.

The events were put on by Bray Area Partnership's Youth Mental Health Sub-group, with funding from youth-led group 'Be Well Bray' and training delivered by Jigsaw, a wing of Headstrong, the national youth mental health organisation.

"We've had brilliant feedback on all of the training," said Jennifer D'Arcy of Bray Area Partnership. "The Jigsaw approach is very youth-centred, with a focus on positive mental health, and they are acknowledged experts and leaders in this kind of

training.

"It's all part of our sub-group's on-going work to develop a whole-of-community approach to youth mental health in the local area."

"So far, we've held two major youth mental health seminars – one for young people and one for the whole community – and we are working closely with local young people, schools and services to provide training and raise awareness.

The work centres on issues identified by young people locally.

"With all the work we have led over the past few years, Bray is considered at a high state of readiness to get a Jigsaw project, notwithstanding the funding challenges," she said.

More info: www.brayareapartnership.ie



Participants who took part in a recent mental health training workshop in Bray designed to support workers and volunteers involved in supporting young people.

VOICES FROM THE BOTTOM

MY YOUTH EMPLOYMENT MAN

- We're right to be angry, but we s

My generation grew up on the back of the Celtic Tiger. We grew up with never before seen technology at our fingertips and at a time when getting a good standard of education was predominant. New innovative businesses were springing up all across the country and the future looked bright. My generation grew up - in a fiercely general sense - having it all.

But this is a tale of a fleeting moment. My generation is now on its knees, carrying a sense of forlornness on our shoulders. In Wexford, my home town, the statistics show that 47% of young people are on the live register. We are emigrating in our droves - not in search of adventure, or experience - but in search of a job. Unemployment at this level is not needed in today's world. Something has got to be done because the youth of today are the future of tomorrow.

I am angry. I am angry because I cannot afford to continue with college this year. I am angry that if I did strive to go, the grant I would receive would not even cover my rent for the year. I am angry because Ireland allegedly has free education but this is not the case, not for people who can barely make ends meet.

I am angry that I may have to consider leaving my own country in pursuit of steady employment. I am angry that a large number of my peers are joining the unemployment line. I am angry that the youth is being punished for aberrations made by 'competent' adults, elected at a time when my generation was

not even old enough to vote.

I am angry that people on the live register- mainly the youth, get judged for being in this situation. I am angry that they are being told to sit down and accept 64 euro a week. I concede to the reality that there are many people out there who make receiving social welfare a lifestyle choice, but what about the people who want a job? The people who want an education? The people who want to better themselves? The people who want to upskill? What about the lost ones? The people swindled out of a steady future? The people robbed of a chance? The people begrudged hope of a better time?

"We the people truly do not know the power we hold"

We the people truly do not know the power we hold. This article is not intended as another tedious piece complaining about how inadequate the shower up in Dublin are. Because let's put things into perspective here; our fair isle will improve. Throughout our history we have always come back from hard times and we went on to prosper. We are slowly but surely getting back on our feet. The youth need to step up and be the change they wish to see. Let us not stand for this economy, let us help ourselves. The key to improvement lies in education, training, entrepreneurship and the creation of jobs.



Vivien Whelan is part of a Youth Action Local Development. She is from Glynn in Media Production and gained work in Tramore Community Radio. Currently Vivien previously worked as a shop assistant.



What-er is going on???

After spending €50m on consultants, Irish Water is being accused of not being transparent - if the water's not transparent, who's going to drink it? The Government claim the opposition keep muddying the water and throwing in red herrings.

Culture Vultures Circle Limerick

Limerick City of Culture has managed to rebrand Limerick from the vulgar Stab City label to a much more cultured 'Backstab & Backbite City'. When the

arts crowd organise something they always turn it into a drama. The whole Cox-up is like a Shakespearean comic tragedy but it has made great theatre and entertained the country so they must be doing something right.

Government Pylon Pressure

The Government, in the latest manifestation of their obsession with power, are prepared to Pylon the pressure on communities and drive the opposition underground, rather than the electric cables.

Hearing Aids Needed

The Taoiseach's aides asked him about his New Year resolutions, he told them, "I'd like to have a go at guitar in January" and to his surprise found himself in "Qatar" the same month. During the trade mission to Saudi Arabia and Qatar, there was further confusion when the Taoiseach thought he was going to a Flintstones Theme Park because he saw Abu Dhabi-Doha on the itinerary.

Ska-ndal over New Year Madness

A lot of people felt it was Madness to

have a British band ring in the New Year in Dublin. It was an absolute Ska-ndal and not so much the straw that broke the camel's back as one-step-beyond.

Cocky Corkonians

Interesting watching the documentaries on two Cork sporting legends Keane and O'Gara - they said the fear of failure was the driving force that made them winners. So, Cork people (yes, dear editor) don't really believe they're great, they're just afraid everyone will think they're crap and hide it by acting cocky.

German GAA

The influence of Germany is all-pervasive in Ireland and now even the GAA has been infiltrated, what with referees brandishing red, yellow and black cards - the colours of the German flag.

Mars mission takes emigration too far

This new mission to Mars should be led by an Irishman as this is the ultimate act of emigration, going far away without any intention of ever coming back.

IFESTO - BY VIVIEN WHELAN

ould help ourselves too



A large amount of 18 to 25 year olds do not even vote. Those who do not vote have no right to complain about the state of the government. Those who do not go out and actively pursue a job do not have the right to claim from the social welfare. We are the future; let's make the future bright for our generation and generations to come.

“Young people have the most drive, the freshest ideas and the least to lose”

I read somewhere: “This generation wants more than any generation that has come before, but is willing to work for it less than any other generation”. In many ways, I think this analogy is legitimate. My generation grew up having it relatively easy, but those days are over, work is the key to coming back with a bang.

Change begins at the centre of the community so setting up group initiatives and trying to change what is happening is something to think about, as opposed to sitting back and allowing others to get us out of such predicaments. We must work together for the greater benefit of all.

Recently I visited Dail Éireann as part of a youth action group in County Wexford - set up to discuss and take action against issues young people have in today's Ireland. I was notably impressed at how

keen TDs were to listen to our opinions regarding changing the way of life for the youth. We met with many TDs including Mick Wallace, Paul Kehoe, John Lyons, Brendan Howlin and Michael D'Arcy. All of whom gave us feedback on the project, lent us advice on how to go about such matters and provided information on issues like The EU Youth Guarantee. Additionally the group gave a submission on how the Youth Guarantee should work to best sustain the youth. As of yet, whether these meetings will have any impact is not known to me.

My generation has a right to be angry. I call upon the Irish youth to take a stand and realise that they can make a change. We do not have to accept what is happening. There are many local development offices over the length and breadth of the country that would be more than happy to govern meetings and organise youth projects where young people can talk about what to do about issues like this. The best people to make the best of a bad situation are young people. We have the most drive, we have the freshest ideas, new ways of thinking and we have categorically the least to lose.

The society in which we live is a favourable one, a fair one, a democracy. Let's use this for all it is worth. When one looks at things in a positive light, the future seems bright. In the grand scheme of things these hard times are just a ripple in the ocean. There is so much better to come. And we, the youth, are the bright future.

Give us a chance to prosper.

on Project set up by Wexford
n, Co. Wexford, has a Certificate
k experience last year with
by on a further work placement,
sistant and as a waiter.

CHANGING IRELAND

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ENERGY

DUNCAN STEWART BELIEVES COMMUNITIES “ON CUSP OF MASSIVE CHANGES”

- ‘ECOYEY’ INSPIRED BY TIPP COMMUNITY ENERGY SCHEME

RTE’s ‘Ecoeye’ on Feb 4th, showcased the work of an award-winning LCDP-supported community energy scheme in North Tipperary.

The scheme’s success shows how communities, in partnership with local and national agencies, can be local drivers in cutting energy bills and creating employment locally.

Between 2012 and 2013, the small voluntary community group in Drombane-Upperchurch, a parish of 1,000 people, leveraged almost €450,000 (including €100,000 raised locally) and carried out energy efficiency upgrades on 50 homes in the area. Half the homes were occupied by people receiving the fuel allowance. The group also retro-fitted two community halls.

Recently, the energy group won the award for the ‘Best Community Renewable Energy Project’, sponsored by Tipperary Energy Agency. Reflecting on what he saw in Drombane-Upperchurch and other sites he visited, presenter Duncan Stewart said, “I believe we’re on the cusp of a massive change. There’s going to be a groundswell movement in every small little community across Europe. In Ireland, it’s slow, but it’s



A weather forecast like we’ve never seen before. Times are changing and communities need to become more resilient.

coming to the point where people will be saying ‘We want local energy, we don’t want to be using fossil fuel, we want to be able to reduce our energy demand and I think that movement is just about to start.’

“Each community needs champions

and a committed team. On Aran, it’s a co-operative; in Drombane and Upperchurch, it was the local energy team. The idea of community energy is beginning to catch on.

“Recently, fifty-one local newspapers around Ireland initiated the nationwide ‘Get Involved’ competition. Their aim is to encourage communities to set up sustainable energy co-ops in each Irish town,” said Duncan.

The programme is available to view online at: <http://bit.ly/1g7M3Ew>

All credit to the people in Drombane-Upperchurch and North Tipperary Leader Partnership for setting the example and showing how it can be done.

* For more information, contact the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (www.seai.ie) or your local newspaper. The Drombane Upperchurch scheme has its own blog and Facebook page.

For earlier coverage, check out ‘Changing Ireland’s in-depth reports: <http://bit.ly/1ibJC98html>



Noel Byrne

Chairperson, Drombane Upperchurch Energy Team

**“Each community needs champions and a committed team”
- Duncan Stewart, ‘Ecoeye’**

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

OUR ISLAND HEROES

Communities themselves first to respond on Inishbofin & King's Island

BY ALLEN MEAGHER & DARRAGH CLIFFORD-CRONIN

In Limerick, on February 1st, the River Shannon and Abbey River burst their banks and a major residential area of a large Irish city was hit by a "Tsunami-like surge of water" that flooded hundreds of homes and terrified thousands of people.

Meanwhile, off the coast, Inishbofin was being battered like never before by Storm Darwin. A pier was destroyed and roads and a beach devastated and this on top of storm damage caused over Christmas and the New Year.

To add to people's woes, there was no immediate response from local and central government.

And so, communities took matters into their own hands.

COMMUNITIES HELP THEMSELVES

On King's Island, communities came to each other's aid, with horse-owner Ger Hogan finding himself in the national media spotlight for rescuing around 100 people using a team of horses and his sulkie.

Neighbour helped neighbour and residents from less badly flooded estates descended on the most badly affected part of King's Island – St Mary's Park – to help people to safety.

The local authorities stepped in later, but not to the satisfaction of locals who forwarded a critical report to An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny.

On Inishbofin, the community put in phenomenal work to save their island from the sea; they literally repaired a beach.

The aftermath remains challenging: Dangerous roads on Inishbofin; vermin present a threat to life on King's Island; and uncertainty lingers in both communities.

For individuals as well as communities, mortgage-holders and renting tenants remain concerned they could be forgotten about. Some homeowners cannot afford the repair costs and, in the meantime, their homes are dangerous and uninhabitable, yet many have no choice but stay.

John Costello, a relief volunteer in Limerick, told 'Changing Ireland': "There has to be a complete sea change in the Government's attitude. The Government has to wake up and realise how difficult flooding is for everyone. Everyone's life changed. It wasn't water flowing down the street, it was people's tears!"

BURNING CLOTHES TO KEEP WARM

A week after the flood, Diane Ryan told 'Changing Ireland' about the living conditions that she and her family of twelve were living through. She provided photographs showing the water rising up her stairs (see page 2). She did not want to be photographed herself.

"Half of the family had to evacuate and stay in friends' and neighbours' houses. Why would they come back, there is nothing here for them to come back to."

"Two unoccupied houses are next to us. The house on my

left has been boarded up for six years. The house on my right has been boarded up for nine years. The water's still inside those houses and it's seeping through the walls into our house.

"We've no heating system in the house, we have only have a fire in the sitting room and we've a bed in there to keep warm. It's a terrible thing to say, because my daughter has a lung infection."

Neighbours had provided coal and timber to burn to keep a fire lit, but it wasn't enough.

The family was burning clothes to keep the fire going during 'Changing Ireland's visit.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

In both places, a community development infrastructure is well established and community workers played an integral part in the recovery.

Inishbofin Development Company was established in 1993 and, while the Irish economy boomed, it was to the forefront in improving the island's infrastructure from piers, roads and an airfield to childcare facilities. (The Government, is this year putting the airfield up for public auction, having abandoned interest in the project).

The company is funded by the Local and Community Development Programme, through a service-level agreement with Comhar na nOileáin Teo/the Irish Islands Federation.

A range of community groups operate on King's Island, including the local office of Limerick City CDP, also funded by LCDP funding (by way of an agreement with the city's PAUL Partnership). There is also St. Mary's Aid and other groups.

Since Storm Darwin, benefit gigs have been held in Limerick and Galway cities to fundraise for King's Island and Inishbofin respectively. Communities as far away as Dublin and Monaghan have pitched in with collections and donations.

People in both communities will tell you they never want to live anywhere else.

St Mary's Park on King's Island was included in Limerick City's Regeneration Plan, since downscaled, and both communities are designated as officially disadvantaged compared to other places in Ireland.



Athlunkard Street, Limerick: Many householders lost all their possessions downstairs.

**INISHBOFIN,
CO. GALWAY:**

Inishbofin is a small island five miles off the coast of Connemara. It is 3.5 miles long and almost two miles wide and there are no trees on the island. In Cromwell's time, its fort served as a prison for priests. Today, while "disadvantaged", the island is a net contributor to the exchequer, principally through tourism.

Population: 200, many elderly.

Labour force: 50/60.

High voter turnout in elections.

Facilities: Childcare, community centre, health centre, community radio studio, community gym, small library and sports hall.

Social Inclusion status: Disadvantaged.*

Population change 2006-2011: Decline.

Formal education levels: Low.

Lone Parent Ratio: Low.

Households without a car: 30-50%.

Music: Noted for its traditional music festivals.

* Source: Pobal Maps (maps.pobal.ie).

THE COMMUN

A team of volunteers worked for ten days to restore the North Beach, Inishbofin. Simon Murray is first on left. People were able to rally more quickly due to the pre-existing local community infrastructure, long established on the island.

VOLUNTEERS REBUILT A BE**INISHBOFIN:**

"People gave of their time and equipment with an incredible selflessness," said resident Hughie McMahon (42) who recorded how fellow islanders fought for ten days with heavy sea swells to repair a 60-foot wide breach of the North Beach which threatened the island. The volunteers worked while "a bitterly cold wind capable of cutting you in two whistled across the lake."

"We took it in turns working long days, from first light until after dark," said Simon Murray, project co-ordinator of Inishbofin Development Company. "Basically we put the beach back together and saved the lake, the road and the houses that were getting cut off everytime the tide came in. We filled large sandbags and plugged the gap."

"We only had a few hours between tides to fill the breach. We got every single digger and dumper on the island down to the North Beach. We'd a team of 20 lads driving seven

diggers and six dumpers. There were loads more volunteers making tea and sandwiches and helping in other ways."

"With the exception of the work done at a volunteer level here, nothing else has been done to date," noted Simon. Normally, such work would be conducted in liaison with the local authority.

"I make absolutely no apology for it. We couldn't live with the situation. The road was flooded, houses were cut off. Also, if you were to go through officialdom to put the beach back together it wouldn't be done for three years. This was an emergency, nobody was coming to help us and we made a conscious decision to help ourselves and in the process we saved the taxpayers north of €400,000. Also, from the County Council point of view, because the road was underwater and was built on soft ground, it would have disintegrated within days. We saved the road."



Photos copyright Marie Coyne. Communities have not lost the capacity to act and change things themselves.

ISLAND VOLUNTEERS

ITY RESPONSE

KING'S ISLAND, LIMERICK:

King's Island, Limerick, has been settled since 150 AD. An earthen embankment normally protects it from the River Shannon which flows by on its west side and the Abbey River on its east. St. Mary's Park is a housing estate built on the island in the 1930s. The estate borders historic English town and King John's Castle.

Low voter turnout in elections.

Facilities: Childcare, community centre, health centre, CDP.

Social Inclusion status: Very Disadvantaged, previously Extremely Disadvantaged (electoral boundaries have changed rather than there being any great improvement in levels of wealth).

Population change 2006-2011: Decline.

Third level education: 1%.

Lone Parent Ratio: High.

Local authority rented: Over 30%.

Households without a car: 50-100%.

Music: St Mary's Prize Fife & Drum Band



Volunteers enjoying a well-earned cup of tea at Star Rovers premises which served as hub for the community. Despite years of official neglect, the community has retained the capacity to rally together and respond to crisis.

ACH & RESCUED FAMILIES

KING'S ISLAND:

"There's a 75 year old man who lives across the road from me; he had his boat out 8am to 8pm to help people get out of their houses," said CDP volunteer Geraldine Reidy.

She said search and rescue volunteer teams came from counties Clare and Limerick, but it was "a while" before they saw council workers or councillors on site.

"People in Abbey View, the Lee Estate, Astin Park didn't even look at the damage to their own homes and instead came down here straight away to help everyone in St Mary's Park because they knew we were in a worse state than them," she said.

"It's a credit to all the people who have worked so hard, 16 hours a day without fear or favour. They have encountered water up to their necks," said John Costello.

The local Star Rover's Football Club became a central point for taking in emergency supplies of food, medication and clothing, entirely under local co-ordination.

Community responses also came from faraway with volunteers driving down from Monaghan and people in Dublin raising money.

Gerry Garvey, general manager of St Mary's AID, which includes a community café, said they fed many families and volunteers and the café acted as a gathering point.

"We served up 480 meals a day which includes breakfast and dinners for the locals and volunteer workers in the area," he said.

Incidentally, some years earlier, the PAUL Partnership helped secure a community crèche in St Mary's Park which opened in 2011. Planners asked the applicants to raise the foundations 1.5 metres higher which the applicants duly did.

"It meant it cost a lot more than envisaged," said a PAUL community worker, "but it was able to open on the Monday as usual and parents could leave their children there in safe-keeping while they went off to try and save their homes."



Urban horse-owners proved their worth in the floods, rescuing over 100 people.



The clean-up continued for many days afterwards.

RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

THE LESSONS/OUTCOMES

In his St. Patrick's Day message, President Michael D. Higgins praised the "spirit of friendship and generosity" shown by Irish people during the recent bad weather. Certainly, there is a stronger sense of community on both Inishbofin and King's Island since the storms, but what has been learnt?

INISHBOFIN:

Simon Murray said islanders always look to themselves first and foremost to keep the island sustainable.

"Certainly, the work restoring the beach boosted community spirit and there's an even greater determination now among the community now to fix problems.

"We're fairly close as it is, but sometimes I'm amazed at the capacity of the community. It plays on your psyche that there are very few people on the island and everybody's got to get on."

"The recession's been good for one thing - it's breathed a bit of life back into communities, people are re-evaluating how they live their lives."

He said that in an emergency all communities must be ready to take action themselves, that it was lunacy not to. On Inishbofin, of a labour force of around 60 or so "we probably had 30 people at least involved in the project".

"We had to start locally at volunteer level because we knew straight away there wasn't any hope of outside help," he said.

"In the long-term, if the Government is going down the road of public tendering for local and community development work, I don't see how it will work. A private company would have no community structure or approval. Tendering could destroy the community development ethos. Our whole model is based on bottom-up, community-owned, community development.

KING'S ISLAND:

"People have been fantastic. We are overwhelmed by people's generosity," said Geraldine Reidy. "There has been an outpouring of kindness from people who are themselves stretched in these very difficult economic times. It seemed we as a nation lost a lot of our values during the Celtic Tiger years and this disaster has proven those values were just dormant. The community spirit of neighbour helping neighbour shines brighter than ever. I am very glad to be part of this community and country."

"All the volunteers in places like the community centre, Star Rovers and the adult ed centre and those out helping people to clean up their homes can never be thanked enough. I can only say it's a great place to live."



Hundreds of homes across King's Island now depend for protection on miles of large plastic bags filled with sand. A half-dozen homes on Inishbofin are similarly exposed.

SOUGHT FROM GOVERNMENT NOW

KING'S ISLAND:

Housing Minister Jan O'Sullivan said approx €100k had been dispensed to needy families. However, as desperate mortgage-holder, 33-year-old Dr. James Ring from Athlunkard Street, Limerick, wrote, "What good are appliances and furniture in a house with no internal walls and without power or heat?"

He had been unable to get home insurance and his home needed an estimated €40,000 - €50,000 to make it habitable once more, money he did not have.

"The authorities need to get their act together and listen to what the people are actually telling them," said CDP volunteer, Geraldine Reidy.

"I talked to (Ministers) Jan O'Sullivan and Joan Burton about the psychological damage. People are worried about their children, they're having nightmares, trampling through the floods, losing homes, losing their possessions," she said.

It is of little interest to such cash-strapped residents that many of the community groups that took immediate action to help people in the community receive government funding.



"There's still a huge problem in the East End because the pier which acted as a seabreak is gone, leaving homes exposed," said Simon Murray of Inishbofin Development Company.

INISHBOFIN:

"Galway County Council had a five-man crew here until 2008; now they only have one worker on the island. One man can't buttress a road on his own," said Simon Murray, shortly after Storm Darwin hit.

"The Council should hire a local crew again on short-term contracts because they could start work immediately. It shouldn't be complicated, we're not building anything new, just conducting repairs.

"If they go down the tendering route, that process is expensive and takes months or even years, because they've to carry out an assessment, draft a tender, advertise it, agree a contract and eventually a contractor comes on site.

"I'm tired of asking the Council to re-instate the crew. Everything we need repaired could have been done by now if we had one, but there's a government embargo on recruitment, even of short-term contract workers.

"We're still waiting for work to be done on the South Road which was undermined in several places in the January storms. In the meanwhile, we had to take in part of a neighbour's front garden, to get in from the cliff and make the road safe to use. It's the only road that goes West."

"Through tourism, the island is a net contributor to the national economy and it shouldn't be too much to expect to see some of that money come back.

"We've done our bit now and we've saved the State around €400,000 by acting quickly. Now, it's the State's turn to fulfil its commitments to Inishbofin."

NEWS

APT TIMING FOR HEALTH & LEADERSHIP COURSE

- as St Mary's needs multiply
CORMAC DOWLING REPORTS

Students from St Mary's Park, King's Island, Limerick, began a leadership and lifeskills course in January.

The diploma course runs for two years, one day a week.

St Mary's community and the University of Limerick collaborated in designing the course which is titled 'Community Wellness, Empowerment, Leadership and Lifeskills' (CWELL).

It differs from any other course of its kind at UL as staff will travel to the community to deliver outreach classes.

Paula Collopy, a mother and lifelong resident of St Marys Park, attended the launch by Minister Jan O'Sullivan in December:

"It's based in the community, it's dealing with health and I can bring information back to my community and help them with problems. I've been involved in the community all my life and that's basically why it appeals to me. Oh, and I'd like a cap and gown!"

Minister O'Sullivan commented: "The idea is what you learn in this programme you bring back and share with your community. It's going to make a difference to the area which has a fairly high level of disadvantage.

"The social pillar of the Regeneration Programme, strengthened by initiatives such as CWELL, is in my view the key

to the overall success of Regeneration in Limerick," she said.

Course director Bernie Quillinan echoed the Minister's sentiments and welcomed the coming together of dozens of community groups in designing and delivering the project.

All in attendance agreed that the programme will not only be a positive development for St Mary's parish, but that UL will reap rewards from such positive community engagement.

Carmel Duggan, chairperson of the Kings Island Community Centre, expressed hopes at the launch that the initiative would help stem the problems of unemployment and early school leaving in St Mary's.

"We've been brought into this as the first community in the country and I think there are now great expectations for the future of St Mary's Park," she said at the time.

The CWELL project runs for two years and is being supported by Limerick City Community Development Project (LCCDP).

For more information, contact Geraldine Reidy, St Mary's Office, LCCDP (T: 061 411 076) or course director. T: 061-213523. E: Bernie.Quillinan@ul.ie.



"Planning and building are just one element of Regeneration," said Minister Jan O'Sullivan at CWELL's launch. Also pictured: Bernie Quillinan, UL, Course Director, and Tony Ryan, Katie Daly's Bar, Nicholas Street, Limerick.

DUBLIN TO GET 'COMMUNITY COURT'

The Government has agreed to a Department of Justice proposal to establish a pilot community court in Dublin city centre.

A report by the National Crime Council first suggested such a court in 2007 and they already operate in the US and Britain, although one in Liverpool shut down recently, reportedly due to high costs and low outcomes.

The crime council suggested a community court could work with people accused of disorderly conduct, being drunk in public, illegal street trading, theft, drug-use and handling stolen property, as well as certain assault cases.



Community courts are common abroad.

In a Seanad debate, Fine Gael's Martin Conway proposed that a pilot be established, saying a community court could be "part of an overall one-stop shop, to ensure people who find themselves before the court can get immediate remedies".

He suggested it could be co-located with counsellors in anger management, drugs and alcohol addiction, community employment, welfare, family disputes and parenting courses.

He said the community court would be a form of "early intervention" within our justice system.

Senator Ivana Bacik referred to Irish Probation Service recommendations to keep costs low, by using existing District Court structures and procedures and by limiting the pilot court to offenders who pleaded guilty to summary offences only.

Senator David Norris also welcomed the proposal, noting that the reason most people were in prison was "a question of poverty".

Since 1999, a pilot project in restorative justice has operated in Nenagh, Co. Tipperary. Offenders are provided with a means to make reparations to their victim or the community. W: nenaghreparation.com

Brehon laws in times past also operated as a form of community-administered justice.

IN PICTURES...

Community developme

800 STUDENTS COMPLETE MUSIC PROGRAMME

- LOUTH LEADER PARTNERSHIP

Over 800 students and teachers from seven primary schools across Co. Louth took part recently in an innovative musical programme. Music Generation Louth received support from Louth Leader Partnership to run the 'Music Matters' early years programme. The philosophy behind the initiative is that all children are born musical and have a right to a high quality musical education that ideally starts in the early years.



FIRST IN IRELAND, PROBABLY!

Is this Ireland's first rooftop community garden? Galway City Partnership opened the garden last summer.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TURNS DAY INTO NIGHT!

- NEW ROSS CDP

If any of these bands hit the bigtime, the LCDP better get some credit: 'Killer Dogz', 'Mong', 'Maye Friday', 'Axblade', 'Narcoclepsy' are just some of the local bands who rehearse and perform at New Ross CDP which is part of Wexford Local Development.

The project is open to over-16s on Sunday afternoons when up to seven bands regularly perform. No alcohol is served "though that certainly doesn't mean no fun", said a New Ross CDP spokesperson. New Ross CDP is active in many



Pictured are Kort Door De Bocht, an off-kilter punk band from Utrecht, Holland, performing in New Ross CDP last summer. Photos courtesy: www.filterkikimedia.com

other ways.

The project organises a parent and toddlers group, a camera club, supports lone parents, affordable dancing classes and supports everyone from immigrants, to men

and lone parents.

Unemployment is high in New Ross and the CDP receives solid support from many local businesses to fund activities.

IN PICTURES...

nt changes lives

CHANGING IRELAND
Not Just a Project
Changing Ireland Community Media Ltd


Line-dancers Kathleen Curtin and Mary Connolly from Our Lady of Lourdes enjoying International Women's Day on March 8th in Limerick.



Training and Transformation books and resource material are now available for sale from Partners. W: www.trainingfortransformation.ie T: 01-6673440.



Community workers from Limerick City Community Development Project helped bring hundreds of women from across the city together to celebrate International Women's Day on March 8th. Pictured: Joan Keehan, Kay Flanagan, Mary Fitzpatrick, Helen Flanagan and Geraldine Clohessy. Also involved in organising the event were Limeerick Women's Network and Moyross Residents Forum.

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Changing Ireland Community Media Ltd

NEWS BRIEFS

COME LIVE WITH US, RESIDENTS CRY

- CORK TRAVELLERS

In February, Travellers living at Spring Lane, Blackpool, Cork, invited councillors to spend a night on their ten-bay halting site to see first-hand the suffering they endure on a daily basis. The site is home to 33 families including over 100 children and 62 adults.

Chrissie O'Sullivan of Cork Travellers Visibility Group (CTVG) described it as "a humanitarian disaster".

No politician took up the invitation (at the time we went to press).

Campaigners have set up a support group on Facebook under the name 'Spring Lane Site Solidarity Group'.

For more info, contact CTVG. T: 021-4503786. E: tvgcork@gmail.com



GO TO UNI IN YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY

- NORTHSIDE PARTNERSHIP

Dubliners have the opportunity now to do a university course through their local library and without the need to do exams or projects.

The 'Communiversities' programme was set up by Northside Partnership, NUI Maynooth and Dublin City Council Library Service to offer adults the chance to try education at this level without the pressures associated with assessments.

Places were limited with priority going to people who are long-term unemployed and groups supported under the Local and Community Development Programme.

For more info, contact Paul Hayes. E: paul.hayes@nspartner-ship.ie T: 01-8485630.



HANDS OFF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- GALWAY CITY PARTNERSHIP

In Galway, local community workers are opposed to the tendering out of community contracts to private, for-profit companies.

They argue, as do other local development companies through their umbrella group, the Irish Local Development Network, that it undermines decades of work and will not save money.

DESTINATION **KEW GARDENS** FOR WESTMEATH STUDENTS

BY KEVIN BRAY

Last year saw horticultural students from Westmeath appear alongside celebrity garden expert Dermot O'Neill as part of RTE's 'Secret Garden' (Ref: 'Changing Ireland', Issue 42, page 9).

All had been long-term unemployed before starting the course.

This year, 17 students are developing parts of the Belvedere Gardens (outside Mullingar) most notably a Victorian walled garden and the entrance area which is in need of landscaping.

The students also go on work placement as part of the 'SOLAS Horticultural Programme' which is run by Westmeath Community Development, in association with Belvedere Gardens, SOLAS and Westmeath County Council. This year, two students are going on placement to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, London.

"Belvedere has all the facilities that any horticultural course needs," said co-ordinator Majella Maher of Westmeath Community Development.

The course is now in its sixth year, is oversubscribed and has established a track record in supporting students into employment and further education. Students get to grow thousands of rare plants with seeds from all over the world during the full-time, 50-week course and they are now setting up a seed bank of their own.

A lover of nature and the outdoors, Anne-Marie Fleming (35) from Mullingar said: "I must admit, I didn't know what to expect. I was looking for something different and I'm happy to say it has far exceeded my expectations. The course is run in a professional manner and I have been hooked from day one.

She is shortly due to go to Kew Gardens with fellow Mullingararian Darren Lynch (20).

"I plan to go on and complete a degree course after gaining more experience in Kew as well as the beautiful gardens of Belvedere. I have met some wonderful



Anne-Marie Fleming is one of two students due to take up a two-week work placement at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, London.

people who I am happy to call my friends and have had one of the best experiences of my life," she said.

She would "very highly recommend" the course to others.

Maurice Stenson, manager of Belvedere House, Gardens and Park, credited the "excellent working relationship" between themselves, the local authority and the local development with making the course a success.

The Level 5 FETAC course covers plant science, soil science, plant identification and use, fruit and vegetable production and much more and the organisers are currently recruiting for the next programme starting in May.

For more information, contact: Majella Maher, co-ordinator. E: mmaher@westcd.ie M: 087-7923349. Also see Kevin Bray's full article on: <http://bit.ly/1hG1vMU>

The course is delivered under Local and Community Development Programme goals 2 and 3.



Course participants on site in Belvedere



The Programme increases peoples' work readiness and employment prospects. (Goal 3)



FORGIVE US! WE'VE TURNED SHY, QUIET PEOPLE INTO DYNAMITE DJS

- *The true value of community radio in Athlone*

**BY DARRAGH
CLIFFORD CRONIN**

DCC: How does someone improve their life-chances or outlook on life by being involved in community radio?

Mary Lennon, station manager, Athlone Community Radio: I've several examples. We've had a lot of highly-educated, young unemployed people who learned skills here and went on to find work in community radio, in mainstream radio and elsewhere. We have young people who decided to go back to college and study media after being with us.

We have people who have been isolated, but through Athlone Community Radio they found something they can get involved with and can work with and feel part of it. The social outlet is an important part.

It would be very hard for me to just pick only one volunteer because with all of our volunteers they'd tell you that being involved with the community radio project has been life-changing in that it has opened up new life chances for them, new areas for them to explore, it's allowed them to develop skills, to showcase their creativity and their talents.

People here have written plays, songs

and poetry. People have come in behind the microphone who came in the first day saying 'I'll make the tea, I'll answer the phones, I'll do whatever, but I won't go behind the microphone'. Before you know it, they're behind the microphone presenting a programme. So one of the greatest things in this community radio station is that it builds confidence and that is life-changing for everybody.

DCC: What attracts volunteers?

ML: Their belief in community, to learn new skills such as broadcasting, to be involved in making programmes. Others come for the social outlet, to make use of skills they have and to have their voice heard. People make programmes that highlight issues for the community.

DCC: What is the greatest value Athlone Community Radio added to communities in its listenership area last year?

ML: The station provides a platform for all other organisations and groups to come in and highlight what they do and discuss the issues that are important to the community. We showcase talent and highlight the good things in the community, because very often it's the negative things that are broadcast.

The station is owned and driven by the community and it's there for the needs

of the community, it's really important that people in the community know the project is theirs to be involved with, theirs to be organised and theirs to run.

DCC: What is the greatest challenge for your station this year?

ML: Community Radio is not-for-profit and the biggest challenges for us are funding, insurance and overheads. Being a voluntary organisation, we're dependent on the community for fundraising and advertising revenue. Another challenge is keeping our programmes fresh for the listenership.

DCC: What are your ambitions?

ML: We hope to expand our schedule. At the moment, we broadcast for 36 hours a week and we're hoping to push that out and start each day with a strong community-based morning programme.

We also want to grow our volunteers and keep people coming through and to provide training through CRAOL, with whom we have a FETAC accredited course. That enables us to provide high quality training that results in good quality programmes being made.

Editor's note: See our Winter '13/'14 edition to learn more about community radio in Ireland.

Athlone rep to chair CRAOL Conference

Irena Cvetkovic, Athlone Community Radio, will chair the annual conference of the community radio network Craol where keynote speakers Vincent Browne, Harry Browne and Frank Connolly will debate the media's influence on our political views.

Also participating are Emer Costello MEP and possibly a Fine Gael minister.

Venue: Teachers Club, Parnell Square, Dublin. Registration via: <http://nearfm.ie/mlconference/> Date: March 29th.



Mairead O'Connor interviews a young listener, or as she put it herself - "Over-zealous reporter attacks young child with microphone." The photo was taken in Athlone Community Radio's first year. It celebrated its third birthday in January.