



## VOLUNTEER!

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- Mulhuddard's 'Shedders' ■ Munster Great Escapes
- Local decision-making ■ HORACE AND MUCH MORE

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**Pictured at the 'Counter Revolution' conference:** Bobby Kerr of Newstalk, Helen Carroll, presenter of RTE's 'Ear To The Ground', Joan Vaughan of Crosspatrick Community Shop, Peter Councman of the Plunkett Foundation and Declan Rice from Kilkenny Leader Partnership. **Photo:** 'Changing Ireland' (AM).

## ABOUT THE LOCAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The €48m 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 programme tackles poverty and social exclusion through partnership and constructive engagement between Government and its agencies and people in disadvantaged communities.

The Programme concludes at year's end and will be followed from Jan 1, 2015 by the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme which builds on the LCDP's success. For more information, see page 14.





## Rural communities sign up for 'Counter Revolution'



Everyone agrees we need stronger communities. But who is responsible for community development: Communities, the State, you and me?

A couple of years ago, two determined village women set up a community shop in Co. Tipperary and now almost everyone in Loughmore has a hand in the project's development.

As supermarkets grow more powerful and Government influence and budgets shrinks, 'The Cottage' is one of the most innovative, yet least threatening of responses, to the erosion of supports for rural living.

So cutesy is the community shop (although Tesco must be keeping an eye) that even Sky News sent down a

team recently to film in Loughmore. Co-operatives rarely receive such lavish attention from giant corporations.

It is, thankfully, inspiring hundreds of like-minded community leaders and leaders-to-be to follow suite. They turned out in force recently for the country's first ever community shops conference, which was organised by five Local Development Companies (LDCs).

For community resilience, rural recovery and revolution - if that's what you're seeking - has to start somewhere. The organisers call it a 'Counter Revolution'.

\*\*\*\*\*

Staying with shopping, public procurement is becoming the way of the future including for State-funded community work. The country has been divided into 31 social inclusion "lots" before the launch in 2015 of the new Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP). It replaces the LCDP.

The lots coincide with the boundaries of the new leaner local authorities and Minister Phil Hogan says the various reforms are needed to reduce the impact of cuts on frontline services.

He also wants communities to have a stronger voice at local level. Here's hoping local organisation reps quickly learn how to work the new Public Participation Networks. And what about a national voice for communities?

\*\*\*\*\*

SICAP has been well-received, it applies lessons learned, it's underpinned by a community development approach and seeks to connect with the hardest-to-reach and most marginalised.

However, by the time it is launched, anticipated funding in this area will have been cut by 50% over five years. Fifty Per Cent. Tell that to the IMF.

We're heading over a funding cliff and most communities don't have a Red Bull flying suit to carry them forwards.

There are so many changes coming that over 2,000 people recently attended 25 meetings called by Local Development Companies. The concern was "alignment" but there are others.

Just think of the children in Clondalkin. A six-year-old shot. We've been there before and we should not as a society be going there again.

*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

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# MINISTER PHIL HOGAN

## - "Not too bad to get all t

Interview by A

**ALLEN MEAGHER:** *Some people see privatisation as a threat. It's not (just) that they might lose their jobs, but they feel a little undervalued in that they've worked for 20 years in the service of the public.*

**MINISTER PHIL HOGAN:** Can I nail this misinformation that's going on? We've 1900 people working in the not-for-profit sector at the local development companies and I'm appalled at the misinformation of some people going around saying that they are going to lose their jobs.

With the new Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme, we have to go through a tender process under competition law, otherwise their work is illegal and I can't as the Minister for the Environment have a structure in place where I'm giving out public money and it's illegal.

The local development companies will have to tender, but they have the experience of over 20 years and a lot of them are doing exceptionally good work and I expect they'll have an excellent chance of winning the tender. For all of the social programmes like Jobpath, they already have to put out to tender. Pobal puts work out to tender to the local development companies on a regular basis, so I don't think the scaremongering of telling their staff that they're going to lose their jobs is doing any service to the existing local development companies.

And I've no doubt that the experience of those staff and those organisations in every county over the last 20 years is going to stand them in good stead when the tendering process commences.

### "ALL SERVICES WILL CONTINUE"

**AM:** *Could privatisation mean that one company, be it a non-profit or profit, starts taking over all services for people with disabilities, drugs or youth?*

**MINISTER:** The most important thing is that all services will continue and we want to put the maximum resources into frontline services and less into administration. There's been a lot of duplication and inadequate integration.

### "NOT ADVOCATING WHAT SECTOR"

**AM – What are the advantages of someone coming in from the private sector?**



*Minister Phil Hogan was interviewed at the Disability Federation of Ireland conference held in Dublin Castle on April 3rd. At the event, the Minister announced four pilot 'Public Participation Networks' were to start operations immediately.*

**MINISTER:** I'm not actually advocating what sector.

**AM – Ok, but you're not opposed to a private-sector, profit-making company?**

**MINISTER:** We've a lot of companies in the charity sector that operate as private companies. Local Development Companies are private companies where we give them the money to operate the programmes and that will be the principle that will still operate.

### ILDN RELATIONS

**AM – Are your relations with the Irish Local Development Network still strong?**

**MINISTER:** The ILDN are operating on (behalf) of private companies and they say they're the best show in town in Europe. We're the only country in Europe actually that has this model of asking private companies to do the business for European and national programmes.

But we want a partnership approach between local government and the community sector such as is followed by most other EU member states and the ILDN now realise that.

And we are going to be asking the local development companies that are successful arising from the tender to roll

# PROUD OF HIS LEGACY: *this done in three years"*

Allen Meagher

out the programmes and operate much of the work that they're doing at the moment. The Local Community Development Committee will be the oversight, the monitoring, the policy place where the community will be represented.

But we will have greater alignment between the community sector and local government to get better value for money and to protect frontline services as much as possible at a time of difficult economic circumstances.

## LESS LAYERS, NOT MORE

**AM:** *What assurance can you give to small, local groups that these kind of changes are not cause for concern? In one way, yes, you're decentralising, but in another way, they're seeing everything's going to the county. They're worried that there are going to be new layers.*

MINISTER: I'm going to have less layers and I'm going to devolve as much function and responsibility from central to local government, so they'll be able to go to their county or city hall to resolve a lot of the problems of the future.

Now that they're paying more at local level for the services and paying more to the local authority in terms of the property tax, there will be a lot more discretion and more accountability at local level.

## SLOW OR QUICK?

**AM:** *Are you happy overall with the way things have gone? Has it been slow or quick?*

MINISTER: Well, after one hundred years, it's not too bad to get all this done in three years.

**AM:** *I know that's your catchphrase.*

MINISTER: It's true isn't it? I'm only there three years.

## CHANGE AND LEADERSHIP!

**AM:** *You've done a lot, but when you're pushing through change quickly, you're going to lose a few people along the way.*

MINISTER: At the end of the day, all we can do is try and explain what we're doing, bring greater engagement between the people and the structures that are there and try and eliminate some of the local bureaucracy.

## SWEETENER

**AM:** *And what about the people who say it's just a sweetener for the local authorities who've had so many changes come their way (eg the closures of town councils)?*

MINISTER: There's no sweetener for anybody here, except for the protection and development of frontline services into the community. The local authority are just facilitating that with a partnership approach with the community in a way that will deliver more services not less.

## LEGACY

**AM:** *This is pretty much the endgame for the plan you had before you were elected?*

MINISTER: Yes, as far as I'm concerned. It's great to get it done in a short space of time, to get the new structures in place and an important legacy for the community.

## OPEN TENDERING NOW KEY GOVT / EU POLICY

**C**ivil society groups used to receiving State funding to support their work face new challenges with the adoption – post-Troika – by the Government of public procurement as a new policy approach to fulfilling its duties to citizens.

Tendering is increasingly becoming the EU as well as the national way to deliver services. Across Europe, new EU procurement directives are being put in place “to support the delivery of key policy objectives through public procurement”.

While critics claim procurement serves the interests of private industry at the expense of the public good, proponents argue that competition is healthy and that the process is more cost effective. The Irish Government's new Office of Public

Procurement (OPP) expects to save the exchequer €500 million over the next three years.



Of interest, a 2012 European court ruling established that cost is not the only factor and public bodies can take into account social and environmental concerns when deciding on who gets public procurement contracts.

An upcoming conference titled ‘Transforming the Way Government Does Business’ which covers technical aspects to tendering and public procurement takes place Dublin on Thursday, July 3rd. The conference details are online: <http://bit.ly/1nx1g9p>

Among the topics being addressed are: the need for collaborative procurement; smart procurement to support economic growth; and the impact of European procurement directives.

For more on procurement, see page 9.



# Counter Revolution

## FIRST EVER COMMUNITY SHOPS CONFERENCE - Seeks action from Govt & An Post

Rural demand for community shops is rising across Ireland as traditional, family-run, rural grocery shops have been shutting down.

Over two-hundred people attended a conference on March 21st in Co. Tipperary to counteract the notion that rural Ireland was unwilling to fight for a viable future.

**BY ALLEN MEAGHER**

The 'Rural Community Retail Conference' was Ireland's first national conference on community shops. It was organised by five Local Development Companies and took place in Horse and Jockey, Co. Tipperary.

With speakers including villagers who, in desperation, set up co-operatives to run shops in areas devoid of services, there was recognition that communities must come up with their own solutions in the absence of changes to planning laws.

Up to 13 retail units are closing down nationwide each week, said Richard Silke of NUI Galway and small villages are being "vacuumed" clean of services.



*Peter Couchman, head of the Plunkett Foundation. It supports and promotes co-operatives and encourages community ownership in rural communities.*

The conference heard calls from national and international contributors for An Post to relax rules over who can provide post office services.

Declan Rice, CEO of Kilkenny Leader Partnership, predicted that, "Community shops are going to become huge over the next few years. It's going to have to happen if we're to continue to have community life in rural areas," he said.

Rising transport costs and "the closure of more and more commercial services in rural areas is increasing pressure on communities to provide their own solutions."

"State organisations such as An Post need to be much more accommodating to community shops," he said.

Peter Couchman, CEO of the Plunkett Foundation which supported the establishment of over 300 shops in England, said, "Two-thirds of our community shops are running post offices as well."

"Communities need to think in terms of looking after themselves, giving themselves a hand-up," he said.

The conference also heard from Mary Fogarty from Loughmore, Co. Tipperary, who helped set up a co-operative-run, community shop and tearooms.

Seven years ago, the last shop in her village of Loughmore, midway between Thurles and Templemore, shut down.

"You couldn't even buy a pint of milk," said Mary. When struck down by cancer, she no longer had the energy to travel the six miles to Thurles for basic necessities and vowed to do something if she survived her illness.

### PASSION & DESPERATION

Mary and co-founder Maeve O'Hair said they were driven by "passion for our village and by desperation at seeing its heart go dead".

Mary had 30 years experience in finance while Maeve had spent a career in journalism and PR.

"We'd both had great challenges in our lives individually. Maeve was widowed and left with young children to raise and I got breast cancer," said Mary.

With support from North Tipperary Leader Partnership and the Plunkett Foundation, they opened Loughmore Co-operative Shop & Tearooms in 2012. It now employs three people, most people in the village have become shareholders and it is sweeping up awards and accolades. It remains one of the few community shops in the country at present but is sure to be joined by more.



*Sharon Stone, communications officer with Kilkenny Leader Partnership designed the poster for the 'Counter Revolution Conference'*

A Ballycahill woman who attended the conference said, "Recently our only shop shut down. It's a very pretty village, but the post office has closed and there's only a pub. I want to see our village survive. I want to go back and hold a meeting and I'm sure a lot of people feel like I do."

Others expressed similar determination and Mary encouraged delegates to link in with their local development company and to make contact with the Plunkett Foundation.

### PLANNERS NEED A NEW LANGUAGE

Arguing that community-run shops are "vital", Kevin Leydon, Professor of Political Science, NUIG, said, "You can buy two eggs in a community shop, or six grapes, and unlike large supermarkets, community shops create an emotional connection in a community."

He called on rural activists to employ a new language in talking to planners about society's needs, stressing community values over developer priorities.

**W:** [ruralcommunityretail.com](http://ruralcommunityretail.com)

**W:** [plunkett.co.uk/](http://plunkett.co.uk/) (Plunkett Foundation).

**W:** [ica.coop/en](http://ica.coop/en) (International Co-operative Alliance).

**W:** [facebook.com/pages/The-Cottage-Loughmore](https://facebook.com/pages/The-Cottage-Loughmore)

# Community Shops

## WHY COMMUNITY SHOPS MATTER

In a presentation at the Counter Revolution conference on community shops, Professor Kevin Leydon, Professor of Political Science in NUIG, outlined the following:

- 1) In Ireland, 74% of the grocery market is controlled by just three companies: Tesco, Supervalu and Dunnes Stores.
- 2) Over half the shop units in the country have closed since 1977, with independently owned shops declining by more than 60%.
- 3) Ireland has the second highest level of market concentration in Europe, with only Sweden having a higher market share for multiples.
- 4) This has an adverse affect on Irish suppliers. For example, if they are not listed with one of the major retailers, they effectively lose access to one fifth of the market.
- 5) Also, the dominance of large retailers means margins for suppliers are pushed down as less competition means farmers share of the retail price is significantly reduced. Since 1995, milk, cheese, pig meat and beef have all become less profitable for farmers.
- 6) The emergence of uniform brands across Ireland has social as well as economic effects. Losing independent stores leads to a loss of traditional varieties and craft production. Independent stores are unique, quirky and better equipped to adapt to local needs and act as focal points of their community where people interact socially.
- 7) This is a key factor in battling rural and urban isolation, and is vital to geographically isolated communities in rural areas and inner cities.
- 8) Local shops can provide a convenient service for the elderly, disabled and carless. Local retailers have a knock-on effect in their towns, as they use the services of local businesses and hire local people.
- 9) It is vital to advocate for public policies and planning regulations that enable healthy rural communities and viable towns, villages and urban neighbourhoods.
- 10) International research shows that isolation and lack of social supports can increase the risk of premature death from all causes.



PICTURED (top-down): (1) Maeve O'Hair and Mary Fogarty of 'The Cottage' community shop in Loughmore, Co. Tipperary, with Henry Healy from Moneygall; (2) 'The Cottage', Loughmore; (3) Crosspatrick Community Shop in Co. Kilkenny.

### Putting the light back in communities!

I don't envisage great policy shifts happening, which puts it back to villages and small towns to make changes happen themselves, to put the light back into their communities.

Planning in Ireland is killing local towns and medical and sociological research shows the benefits to communities of having local shops.

- Gearoid Fitzgibbon, community worker with North Tipperary Leader Partnership



Carlow County  
Development Partnership  
Comhaltacht Pobailtá Thionnais Chaitheamh





# WHAT HAPPENED THE VILLAGE SHOP?

BY JOE SAUNDERS

"Once upon a time, there were seven shops in our village. Then, there were none."

Sound familiar? Unfortunately, this is the story all over rural Ireland. We have a list of factors to blame – the multiples, emigration, urbanisation, motorisation – but there's no putting the genie back in the bottle.

However, it seems that something is happening in Loughmore, Co. Tipperary, that is resonating with communities all across the country.

Mary Fogarty, one of the driving forces, reflects that her motivation came from an unwillingness to simply sit back and watch the demise of her village. She was joined by local producer

Maeve O'Hair whose apple varieties date back five centuries.

Maeve emphasises the importance of local produce to the venture:

"We try to have as much local home produce for sale as possible and in return, the producers get a fair price for their

goods. We also have a small craft area/gallery space and welcome submissions from all artists and craftspeople wishing to have their work displayed."

North Tipperary LEADER Partnership CEO, Michael Murray, notes the similarities between Loughmore and other Irish villages,

"Poor demographic profile and outward commuting patterns pose a severe challenge to village shops and when they close, so much else of rural life is affected."

"We were delighted to get behind the Loughmore project because it came with a great community ethos and has really utilised strengths that are to be found in so many local areas. Although we could not support the retail element, we loved the concept and helped

them develop other elements that could be supported."

Once the local people signed up as shareholders, the Community Co-operative shop and café became a reality, open seven days a week, the first of its kind in Ireland.

Somehow, we don't think it will be the last.

*"It came with a great community ethos and has really utilised strengths that are to be found in so many local areas."*



*After many years without a post office or a post box, The Cottage, Loughmore, Co. Tipperary, has established a "Post Point" with An Post.*

*"Customers can now pay bills, get phone credit, buy stamps and post their letters in our new vintage postbox," said Maeve O'Hair.*

*An Post shut down 209 post offices in recent years and has entered a partnership with Tesco.*

## MOST EXCITING TIME IN OUR 30 YEARS FOR CO-OPERATIVES



By  
**Noreen  
Byrne\***

In the 30-year history of the Centre for Co-operative Studies at UCC,

there has never been a more exciting time for co-operatives.

In addition to our well-established credit union and agricultural co-operative sector, new co-operative developments are emerging across Ireland and there is plenty of activity bubbling beneath the surface.

Just look at the wide variety of events promoting the co-operative idea at present.

At the Community Shop Conference held in the Horse and Jockey, on March 21st, we were struck by the fact that everybody we met was either thinking of setting up a co-operative shop or was in the process of establishing one or had one already established. It is often easy to think when driving through sleepy villages and towns that there is little going on – this is far from the case and there was a full attendance at the conference.

We also attended the Cloughjordan Feeding Ourselves Conference organised by the Eco-Village on April 5th. People came from across the country for it and again many were in the process of establishing farmer networks, Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs), buying groups and so on.

During this conference, Duncan Stewart, environmentalist and broadcaster, announced the 'Get Involved' competition that aims to highlight community and co-operative initiatives around energy and food. The competition is being run nationwide in conjunction with local newspapers.

Another conference held recently was the Energy Co-operative Conference organised by the Society for Co-operative Studies in Ireland and the Centre for Co-operative Studies, UCC. It was held in Dublin on April 8th. Again, many people were there because they were researching or had established energy co-operatives.

Another interesting initiative currently underway is the Public Banking Forum which has partnered with the Savings Bank Foundation for International Cooperation and is in the process of designing a model of regional, publicly-owned banks. The

new banks would link with the Credit Union movement and An Post to offer loans to the SME sector to kick-start local and regional economies and develop an indigenous industrial sector in Ireland.

In Germany, public and co-operative banks such as these provide almost 60% of the value of loans to SMEs, while the commercial banking sector only provides 26%. This is a timely initiative as lack of credit is undermining both the farming and SME sectors in Ireland.

All in all, these are indeed exciting times for co-operative activists and researchers in Ireland.

**\* Noreen Byrne is a researcher/lecturer at the Centre for Co-operative Studies/ Dept. of Food Business & Development, University College Cork.**

**NOTE: Saturday, July 5th, is the International Day of Co-operatives.**





# Opinion: Communities & Privatisation

## LESSONS FROM THE UK

- Professor Dexter Whitfield speaks to Rober Carey:

What is being proposed in Ireland regarding procurement and the community sector has been the practise in the UK for some time.

The privatisation agenda in the UK is well advanced and pervasive to the point where distinctions between public goods and services and the private have all but disappeared. This now applies equally in the social and community sector whereby services previously provided by local Government or by grant aided community organisations are now put out to contract and are delivered by either large NGOs or private sector corporations.

The process of procurement itself can be complex and, most importantly, it leads to a procurement culture, whereby the overriding objective becomes the securing and maintenance of the contract, to ensure the survival of the delivering company. This impacts on how the company approaches the work and is something LDCs may have to face.

Democratic accountability also suffers in that the tendering group, a local authority for example can

pass the responsibility for issues onto the private contractor and visa versa, with no real accountability. Communities suffer in that localism often disappears, where previously you had local people working for local groups who were part of the community, you may have an outside private company. Although they may appoint some local people for purposes of representation – it can tend to be tokenistic rather than truly representative and embedded

Another consequence in the UK has been that employees' conditions tend to deteriorate and, even if they are transferred across to the new contractor, their conditions can suffer and their long-term futures are less assured.

Despite often having an overemphasis on cost being the pre-eminent criteria, outsourcing to private companies doesn't always attain the savings required and extra costs such as the transfer costs of organising the procurement process itself will accrue.

Regarding designing and assessing tenders, areas such as previous



Professor Dexter Whitfield.

experience in delivery of community development work, overall company standing and how to build in localisation should all be taken into account in tender documents. However, based on my knowledge of what has transpired in the UK, privatising community development is not a desirable strategy for communities or workers.

### ABOUT DEXTER WHITFIELD

Dexter Whitfield is director of the European Services Strategy Unit and Adjunct Associate Professor, Australian Institute for Social Research, University of Adelaide.

He is the author of 'Public Services or Corporate Welfare' (2001), 'New Labour's Attack on Public Services' (2006), 'Global Auction of Public Assets, Reconstructing the economy, state and public services', (2010), and 'In Place of Austerity' (2012). He lives in Camp, County Kerry and works extensively in the UK and has considerable experience of procurement.

## JASON HYLAND – MATURE GRADUATE, SEEKS WORK IN THE COMMUNITY & VOLUNTARY SECTOR.

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T: 087-293-2717. E: jasonhyland22@gmail.com



Dear Changing Ireland Readers,

Like many graduates I find it a challenge to find paid work in the sector I have studied for and desire to work in. Currently, I volunteer two days a week with Merchants Quay Ireland.

I am interested in any kind of work in any area in the Sector, for example, work with people experiencing homelessness, ex-offenders or people involved in the criminal justice system. All offers most welcome.

Yours Sincerely,  
Jason Hyland

### REFERENCES:

*"Produces work of the highest calibre...remarkable communication skills...I would highly recommend Jason" - Dr.Cormac Doran, Tutor, ITB.*

*"Committed, dependable and adaptable" - Philip Jennings, Co-ordinator, Safer Blanchardstown Community Policing Forum*

*"Very dedicated to his work. He will accomplish his goals" - Ken O'Connor, Manager, After Care Services, Merchants Quay Ireland.*

### CV HIGHLIGHTS

- Volunteers with Merchants Quay Ireland and Safer Blanchardstown Steering Committee.
- Recently co-ordinated a project involving 60 volunteers;
- Garda vetted. Various courses (eg Strengthening Families).
- BA in Social & Community Devt (2013).
- MA in Criminology (Expected).
- Successfully ran own business with 6 employees for 15 years.
- CV & full references available on request.
- LinkedIn profile: <http://ie.linkedin.com/pub/jason-hyland/75/315/444>

# GAME-CHANGER IN RELATIONS

## PRIVATISING COMMUNITY WORK – THE - As declining State funding remains a challenge

**ALLEN MEAGHER  
REPORTS**

“There’s no going back. The genie’s out of the bottle,” remarked the head of one of 50 local development companies as he left an information meeting about the offering of community services in Ireland to tender by companies from across Europe. The seminar room was packed for the meeting.

Held in Dublin, the meeting was called by officials from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and Pobal to brief not-for-profit companies already providing such services.

The officials provided carefully worded answers or assurances where they could, but often pleaded they could not comment.

All LCDP-funded companies have contracts until the end of June and have supplied on request to the Department full-year financial projections. Clodagh McDonnell, Principal Officer in the Community Division, assured all present they would remain part of the LCDP until December 31st, 2014.

Thereafter, the new Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme will take the LCDP’s place.



Despite Pobal/Dept insistence that only “legitimate” questions could be asked, that the day was about tendering and not the politics behind it, questions came from the floor about looming redundancies as some companies are unable to tender due to the rules and regulations.

“It’s neo-liberalism plain and simple, no other word for it,” said one.

Pobal and the Department were commended by independent procurement process advisor Jeanne Copeland who said tendering was rarely accompanied by information events. A repeat of the session was held in the afternoon and was attended by representatives from a number of

overseas companies.

A soft round of applause rounded off the morning event, but as everyone said and Pobal’s Jerry Murphy acknowledged the landscape had changed utterly: “This is a gamechanger in relations between the Irish state and the Community Sector.”

### PRECEDENT SET

Within the community sector, a precedent was set some years ago when community health care for elderly people in their homes began to be awarded to

and social exclusion. Most existing companies providing such services are expected – given that they know the work intimately – to do well. None are guaranteed a contract.

“Anyone can register an interest in tendering,” said Jeanne Copeland. However, the second (final) stage of the tendering process is arduous.

The terms and conditions are stringent and dismiss the possibility of any company without experience in social



private companies. They dominate the marketplace today.

While the ultimate test is ‘Do communities gain?’, in this Troika-planned era, the mantra is that competition is good, market forces best determine pricing and the lighter the load on government the better.

The process has divided up our cities and counties into “lots” to be tendered for to deliver programmes to tackle poverty

inclusion, equality and anti-poverty work (in Europe) from applying. Most LDCs are not large enough on their own to lodge a bid that might be successful. Companies are expected to form consortia.

“It mightn’t be as bad as we’ve feared,” remarked a representative from one of the larger LDCs afterwards. “I mean who else can deliver as well as us?”

LDCs have surpassed almost all programme targets year after year, a “re-



# THE GENIE'S OUT OF THE BOTTLE

## concern

markable achievement given the funding retrenchment in recent years", principal officer Clodagh McDonnell remarked.

There are a raft of changes coming this year and next and over recent months, close to 10,000 people have signed a petition and over 2,000 have attended protest or "information meetings" over the looming changes.

### SAVE LDCS

The 'Save LDCs' petition is part of a nationwide campaign to alter plans for "alignment" whereby new Local and Community Development Committees administered by the local authorities would take on the role previously performed by LDCs. Putting the work out to public tender increases the pressure on LDCs and the campaign continues.

The way was signposted prior to the General Election in 2011 in Fine Gael literature, yet campaigners argue "If it isn't broken, why fix it?"

While everyone agrees that the LDCs, by and large, have a tremendous track record, the bigger policy plans of government favour public procurement and local government reform. Minister Hogan says his achievements are of historic proportions and will be good for communities and local government.

And as he told 'Changing Ireland' in an interview, "I've no doubt that the experience of those staff and those organisations in every county over the last 20 years is going to stand them in good stead when the tendering process commences."

### THE DUBLIN 'LOT'

However, the "lots" don't neatly match the areas covered currently by LDCs.

In Dublin's inner city, there is a particular challenge. In the city centre, the impact of social exclusion and poverty is increasing, however the LDC for the area shut down four years ago and in these times of straitened government spending it was never replaced.

The network of CDPs and other small groups in Dublin's inner city have a hill to climb together to gather the resources, know-how and connections to make an acceptable joint-bid to continue the work

they're currently doing.

One network leader asked how she could magic up 28 employees - the rules debar her company with 7 employees from applying so she must form a consortium with others.

### ISLANDS, WOMEN, TRAVELLER GROUPS

Island groups, women's groups, Traveller groups and ten or so other companies with a national remit or with a specialism, including 'Changing Ireland', face similar or in cases an unsurmountable challenge. While it's not as if people didn't know change was coming, the nature of the work makes fundraising difficult. Hence the reliance (over-reliance, some may argue) on the State in reaching out to, empowering and supporting those most excluded from society.

The new public procurement process is a challenge even for the bigger companies with more resources to hire in someone to help with the application.

I approached Ballymun's Fiona Dextotux for a comment at the end of the meeting, she was polite but too busy to talk. Beside her stood Marian Vickers of Northside Partnership and other Dublin CEOs with their smartphones and diaries in hand to urgently fix on a date to meet and see about forming a consortium.

### ESF FUNDS

Already, however, with the genie out of the bottle, it is weaving some magic. Ms McDonnell said that, subject to formal approval, "SICAP will be allocated some ESF co-funding for labour market supports to young people, in particular those not in employment, education or training, including young people at risk of social exclusion and young people from marginalised communities."

The ESF funds are whispered (not confirmed by the Dept) to be in the order of €17million - available to the new programme over six years.

### POSSIBLY €40M

This year, €48m was allocated for the LCDP and officials have spoken of a figure of around €40m for the successor programme: The budget will be decided

on in October. If that came to pass, it would mark a 50% reduction in social inclusion / anti-poverty programme funding over five years.

However Eddie Kiernan, private secretary to the Minister, replying recently to concerns raised by one LDC, said, "The new arrangements will place local development structures on a more sustainable footing and help lessen the impact of considerably reduced programme funding over the next few years."

Communities will be able to give you the measure of that statement a year from now.

## TENDERING & TIMEFRAME

- Tenders will be decided based on bidder's value for money, previous experience, personnel resources and financial turnover in the field.

- No bidder can vie for more than five lots.

- Closing date (extended) for registering expressions of interest: July 11th.

- Begin local tendering: First week in September.

- Contracts signed: first week in December.



**NOTE: Of interest, in 2011, the OECD published a study titled "The Role of the Private Sector in the Context of Aid Effectiveness" which is available online.**

## MULHUDDART 'SHEDDERS' COMMITTED

RAY LUCEY REPORTS

**M**ulhuddart Men's Shed in West Dublin has the look of a builders' yard, but that's as far as the comparison goes. You could literally pick up an egg there, make a sandwich, sit down on restored furniture and get carpentry tips from a warm and welcoming group of men over a cup of tea.

I visited on a sunny day in May and was amazed to see everything from hand-made birdhouses to wheelbarrows, planters, restored furniture and reconditioned bicycles. That was only the half of it and the men also look after a brood of chickens.

Hans Meyer explained, all profits from the shed's activities are invested in developing Mulhuddart Men's Shed, in line with the principles laid down by the Irish Men's Shed Association nationally.

Hans, originally from Hamburg, became a member of Mulhuddart's shed and is now employed there as a Tus worker. He told of the many lives being transformed and the benefits that members of sheds, 'Shedders', gain from being involved. He said there is a true democratic structure underpinning Mulhuddart Men's Shed and all members have a say in the running of it.

"I enjoy every single minute here and you have a laugh everyday," said Hans.

Mulhuddart Men's Shed has received many awards, including the Fingal Cleaner Communities Award 2013 and a

STAR award from Aontas.

John Evoy, founder and CEO of the Irish Men's Sheds Association, cites the Mulhuddart Men's Shed as a perfect working model and a fine example of what one should be. A shed's aim is to gather men to work and talk shoulder-to-shoulder while also developing a space to benefit themselves and their communities.

### COMMUNITY WORKER

Jean Clifford, community development worker with the Blanchardstown Area Partnership, provides invaluable support to the group: She deals with funding and training and acts as a vital link with statutory bodies and agencies, including Crosscare and the local VEC.

She pointed out that the men are taking part in various courses in partnership with the Rediscovery Centre, Ballymun, and the Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown.

On June 10th, the men took part in a 'Challenges, Choices and Celebration' event, held as part of Men's Health Week. The event was supported by the Blanchardstown Area Partnership, the HSE, Touchstone Pharmacy and the Marie Keating Foundation.

The Shed's biggest challenge for this Dublin 15 project is funding, so they apply for as many streams of funding as possible. Locally-based multinational



AWARDS: Tony, Dan and Hans with their Aontas Star Award

Ebay assisted with the initial costs of establishing the shed, while local businessmen Anthony and Paul Dunne provide the site rent-free to the shed. They each feel a social obligation to the area and without Anthony's and Paul's support the shed would not be in existence today.

As Hans acknowledged, they are most fortunate to have so much space as this is a challenge for other sheds around the country.

Another locally-based multinational company looks likely to give valued support in the near future.



## "Nothing is too silly" for Southill Men's Shed

**S**outhill Men's Shed was the first shed to win an Aontas 'Star' Award for recently completing a course in leadership, networking & communication, **REPORTS ALLEN MEAGHER.**

From a slow start three years ago, the shed now has 15 members and there's a waiting list to join.

Member Thomas Mulready said, "Nothing is too silly or too extravagant for us. Carpentry courses, sewing... One of the lads wanted to learn how to take up a pants, rather than pay €7 in town to have them taken up. So we did a course in sewing."

Adrian Hogan said the sheds keep men healthier, get shy men talking and provide life-changing experiences.

He was dressed from head-to-toe

PICTURED LEFT: Timmy Keehan and Ger Kelly at work (voluntary).

in a painter's outfit, with brush in hand. The 'shedders' had taken on a project to paint an empty grey factory shell in bright, cheery colours. It was due to open in a matter of weeks as a parents and toddlers centre and the pressure was on. Less time for the usual banter.

### CUPPA IS A KEY TOOL

Nonetheless, one of the most valuable tools in any men's shed is the teacup and coffee-cup, reflecting the key social element.

"It's not all work," said Thomas. "We've been on pitch and putt outings."

"And we're off to Killarney soon to see the men's shed there," Adrian pitched in.

"We've been to Dublin to collect an Aontas award," added Timmy Keehan.

However, the men do keep themselves busy.



# Men's Sheds

## DEDICATED TO THE COMMUNITY



ard, one of a number the Men's Shed picked up recently.

### DOUBLING MEMBERSHIP

This is helpful as there are presently 12 members, varying in ages from 32 to 68, but many more local men also wish to become involved and the project must expand if more members are to join.

The project plans to build a permanent workshop (the men presently have one in a prefab). Ideally this will be constructed before the onset of winter and businessmen Anthony and Paul have already supplied concrete blocks. The 'Shedders' are asking other local

companies to contribute towards additional building material costs.

A membership of 24 would be manageable when the permanent workshop is built.

### COMMUNITY SPIRIT

At Mulhuddart Men's Shed I was struck by the camaraderie and feeling of real community spirit that it exuded. I repeatedly heard them say, "It gives me a reason to get up in the morning" and "Without this I would go mad."

The number of sheds nationally is increasing rapidly, almost 200 at last count, and long may it continue as they are building real social networks and supportive spaces for men.

So what makes Men's Sheds, and especially the one in Mulhuddart so successful? As Hans put it, "Basically it comes down to people opening up as they're not under pressure anymore."

**For more information, contact Hans on: 087-7371347.**



### JOURNALIST

Based in Lucan, Co. Dublin, Ray Lucey has joined the 'Changing Ireland' journalism team.

Ray holds a BA (Hons) in Media Production & Management and has over 25 years experience in the commercial print industry. He has held a variety of part-time and volunteer positions over the past decade in Aontas, N4TV, Liffey Sound FM and South Dublin Community Platform.

He looks forward to receiving calls about stories from LCDP-funded groups and associate organisations. Daughter Fiadh has agreed to assist with photography.

**E: raylucey@gmail.com**

**T: 087-957-9941.**

**Note:** Ray also handles advert sales in print and online. Discounts available.

## Men's Shed

"We've produced toyboxes for the crèches in Southill and Our Lady of Lourdes. We made decking chairs and a flower-bed for the Southill Area Centre," said Thomas. "One of our key aims is to give back to the community."

### NO-ONE IN CHARGE

Southill Men's Shed was formed after Southill FRC and the Southill Area Centre sought to set up a men's group. The shed continues to receive support from both organisations, as well as the PAUL Partnership which helps fund the Limerick Men's Shed Association.

And who's in charge?

"We're all in charge, there's no boss," they replied in unison.

**For more information, email: timmykeehan@gmail.com**



Ger Kelly, Thomas Mulready, Timmy Keehan, Adrian Hogan, Christy 'Buster' McNamara and Pat Prior recently took on a project to paint a local parents and toddlers centre. Also involved: James McCarthy, Sean O'Brien, Martin Mulally, Johnny Cabill and Willie Linehan.

# New anti-poverty programme

## NEW 'SOCIAL INCLUSION AND COMMUNITY ACTIVATION PROGRAMME'

### Aim & Vision

The aim of the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) is: "To reduce poverty, promote social inclusion and equality through local, regional and national engagement and collaboration."

SICAP's vision is to improve the life chances and opportunities of those who are marginalised in society, living in poverty or in unemployment through community development approaches, targeted supports and interagency collaboration where the values of equality and inclusion are promoted and human rights are respected.

### 3 High Level Goals

#### Goal 1

To support and resource disadvantaged communities and marginalised target groups to engage with relevant local and national stakeholders in identifying and addressing social exclusion and equality issues.

#### Goal 2

To support individuals and marginalised target groups experiencing educational disadvantage so they can participate fully, engage with and progress through life-long learning opportunities through the use of community development approaches.

#### Goal 3:

To engage with marginalised target groups/individuals and residents of disadvantaged communities who are unemployed but who do not fall within mainstream employment service provision, or who are referred to SICAP, to move them closer to the labour market and improve work readiness, and support them in accessing employment and self-employment and creating social enterprise opportunities.

### Community development underpins all

All of SICAP's work is underpinned by:

1. Community Development approaches and principles.
2. Collaborative with stakeholders on unemployment and socially exclusion.
3. The promotion of equality and the prioritisation of disadvantaged communities.

*For more information, visit [changingireland.ie](http://changingireland.ie), [environ.ie](http://environ.ie) & [pobal.ie](http://pobal.ie)*

## WHAT THE PROGRAMME PROMISES

### GOAL 1 - OUTCOMES

1. Greater participation by members of disadvantaged groups and communities in a community development context.
2. Increased representation and participation of disadvantaged groups in local policy and decision making processes that address social exclusion.
3. Enhanced capacity of local community groups of place and interest, to progress their stage of development and/or address the needs of disadvantaged communities.
4. Increased and improved co-ordination, joint planning and delivery between service providers and local community groups on social inclusion initiatives.

### GOAL 2 - OUTCOMES

1. Increased participation in education and training.
2. Positive change in participants' learning aspirations and/or personal development.
- 3 & 4. Greater participation in accredited and unaccredited education / training.
5. Reduced numbers of people that leave school early.
6. Improved supports for those who have left school early.
7. Improved design and delivery of education and training which takes into account the needs of the target group(s).

### GOAL 3 - OUTCOMES

1. Individuals are better prepared to enter the labour market.
2. Increased employment rates.
3. Individuals are securing better quality employment i.e. receive the Living Wage.
4. The long-term unemployed, marginalised target groups and unemployed youth have enhanced opportunities to access self-employment and social entrepreneurship opportunities.
5. A more developed social economy and social enterprise sector in Ireland which contributes to local community development.
6. Increased and improved joint planning and delivery between local service providers and statutory agencies leading to more joined-up pathways for people.
7. Reduced duplication of service provision, better identification of any gaps between services and plugging gaps in mainstream service provision with local initiatives.



*Pictured: A protest meeting in Ballyhoura as part of the 'Save LDCs' campaign. While SICAP has been welcomed, the "alignment" with local authorities has caused consternation. Over 2,000 people attended 25 meetings recently and ten local authorities debated the issues and passed motions of support.*



# Participating in local decision-making

## "IF YOU'RE NOT HEARD, MAKE NOISE, RAISE THE DECIBELS"

- Fr Sean Healy explains thinking behind new Public Participation Networks

### What are Public Participation Networks (PPNs)?

PPNs are a new structure for engaging all community and voluntary, environmental and social inclusion organisations in the workings of local authorities and in talking with them.

If organisations do get involved and insist on their voices being heard and making noise if they're not heard, then I could see the PPNs making quite a substantial transformation at local level.

The proposal came from the Committee on Citizen Engagement established by Minister Hogan last September. He asked me to chair it and I did. We recommended that the key participation structure at local level would be these PPNs in which every organisation would be automatically a member at county level.

### What's different about PPNs?

People can get to the tables that matter to them.

### What's better than what went before?

If there's a space in a local working group or committee, it should go to people from an organisation is dealing with that particular issue. For instance, disability organisations will be represented if the issue is disability.

The new PPN structure can draw together the people involved in that issue, the stakeholders, and they choose who goes forward to represent them.

Not alone that, but they have to report back on a constant basis and if they don't, they lose their position. You can't have someone getting elected to represent you and off they go and you never hear from them again and they're still there 15 years later. That needs to finish completely.

### How will PPNs tell people what's happening?

Every PPN should have a proper, transparent communications structure so that all the policy positions being taken and minutes from meetings are all in the open, not behind closed doors. Local and social media are critical to that and the work will be done by the secretariat which (we insisted)

has to be resourced.

### Why do you think people will get behind this?

We sought a mechanism whereby local organisations could play a real role in the structures being put in place and rolled out by government. This is the best you can do - within the new structures - to bring organisations to the tables where decisions are made that affect them. They can have a real say and be heard and, if they're being ignored, then it's up to the PPN to make noise, real noise. PPNs would have that capacity to make noise, to raise the decibel level at local level quite high.

It's not that I agree with alignment and the various things being done in the reform of local government.

### What is the measure of the Minister's backing for the proposals?

The Minister (immediately) agreed to pilot the concept in four areas, Galway, Laois, Tipperary and South Dublin. It's critical to roll it out on time, resource it properly. Also we need to ensure the regulations can't be bypassed at a local level because someone else decides they've a better idea which could be that, for instance, one person picks all the representatives for committees.

### You got grief for chairing the group. Why?

I got grief from people who felt I shouldn't be co-operating with the government at all. Well, I've spent my life working with whatever government gets put in front of me. I'll deal with whoever gets elected, they have a mandate from the people. I would make no apology for chairing the committee or for the proposals we've come up with it.

Is the PPN the best structure that has ever been created... Far from it, but it is the best in the current context.

Across the country, the Community & Voluntary Sector has lost 40-plus percent of its funding. It's a very difficult time. It's a challenge for people locally to get involved and I understand fully why people are sceptical. But, do you take the opportunity, small as it is, or don't you?



Fr Sean Healy.

My view always is that you take it. Do what you can do today and come back and see what you can do tomorrow. The danger with doing nothing today is that, when you come back to it, there may be nothing to do tomorrow.

● Interview by Allen Meagher.

## On the ground: A lot of jazz or real citizen influence?

There was brisk questioning from the public at an information meeting held in Nenagh Arts Centre on May 26th about how the PPN will work in Co. Tipperary:

Q. How will the Network be resourced? A secretariat with a resource worker will run the County PPN and manage communications.

Q. Will there still be town plans? Not sure.

Q. Would it also provide support and training to community groups? Yes, apparently.

Q. Will groups have to join the PPN to get funding? Yes.

### On leaving the event, people expressed three distinct views:

- This is the beginning of something potentially groundbreaking – potential citizen assemblies now to be established on a statutory basis.

- The PPNs will be too complicated and too far removed from the concerns of local voluntary groups. They will only attract hardened meeting-goers.

- This represents layers of new bureaucracy, which will only serve to further remove people and groups from direct access to council staff.

Time will tell if the new structures work or are an elaborate box-ticking exercise.

For Gearoid's Fitzgibbon's full report, visit 'Changing Ireland's news blog: it explains PPNs from a community worker's viewpoint.

Also see [www.bit.ly/ppntipp](http://www.bit.ly/ppntipp) which explains other major changes afoot.

## First work of new networks

- PPNs will be the main community based nominating body for all local government committees, including Special Policy Committees and the new Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs).

- They will be made up of the representatives of local community-based groups.

- The first action of the new Public Participation Networks (PPNs) will be to develop a vision for the well-being of this and future generations locally.

# SERVING THE PEOPLE WHO

## - PROJECT BOOSTS INDEPENDENCE, MAKES "PRO"

### INTRODUCTION

**A**vondhu Blackwater Partnership part-funds Munster Great Escapes, a not-for-profit which allows people with learning disabilities avail of weekends away, giving them some excitement and giving their parents/carers a small break. The LDC funds volunteer expenses.

When so much LCDP-related news has been dominated lately by the discussion surrounding 'alignment' and how it will change the face of local development, it's easy to forget that LCDP funding isn't a hypothetical construct, battled around in the political sphere to garner support or vilify opposition. It can be a real force for good and it can change lives.

An example of that comes in the form of Munster Great Escapes.

Set up in September 2012, Munster Great Escapes is a club that offers holidays to adults with intellectual disabilities. The aim is to grant those adults some autonomy and independence while also giving their families and carers a break.

As chairperson and co-founder Caitriona Campbell puts it, "As much as we all love our families, sometimes we want to get away from them."

The club gives its members that opportunity. To date, they have taken two-

day trips to Killarney, Clonakilty, Limerick, Dungarvan, Waterford City, Tralee and Bantry, and have taken a four-day trip to Costa del Sol.

A four-day trip to Portugal is in the pipeline for this year.

While other services do offer group holidays to clients, Caitriona knows that Munster Great Escapes is different, giving its members that little bit extra: "What's good about our club is that it's a normal activity. We take the bus or train, we stay in hotels... we do what everyone else does on holidays."

### AVONDHU BLACKWATER PARTNERSHIP

But that can make trips expensive, not least because of the club's entirely volunteer-based structure.

As a result, the club is supported in part by Avondhu Blackwater Partnership – the north



### By Kirsty Tobin

Cork local development company – which provides LCDP funding to offset volunteer costs that would otherwise be carried by members.

The successful marriage of Munster Great Escapes and Avondhu Blackwater came about thanks to COPE's Jerry Mullane. Hearing about Munster Great Escapes through the grapevine, Jerry reached out to Caitriona, offering a potential influx of new members if the club expanded into North Cork. This raised money issues – more members, more costs – and Jerry suggested



*Members of the 'Munster Great Escapes' group on a break in Youghal, Co. Cork: Noel Crowley, Louise Healy, Ciara Hickey, Sarah Lynch, Thys McCarthy, Ross Twomey, Marie Hickey, Patrick O'Connell and Aileen Healy.*





# D MOST DESERVE A BREAK FOUND" DIFFERENCE & TRANSFORMS FAMILY LIFE

getting in touch with Avondhu Blackwater.

The company was able to provide funding through the Local Community Development Programme, supporting Munster Great Escapes in this year's endeavours and adventures.

## A LIFELINE

Munster Great Escapes is more than just a holiday club. While it does, on the surface, merely provide a way to give families a break, the outcomes are significantly more far reaching than that. The benefits of the club were summed up quite succinctly by Caroline Conway, the mother of club member Sean.

"It's transformed our lives."

When asked to explain that transformation, Caroline painted a picture of a radically changed family dynamic. Gone is the guilt accompanying every holiday. Caroline and her husband, John, no longer have to feel bad about dragging Sean along with them, and Sean's sister no longer has to feel guilty about enjoying experiences her brother can't have.

But the biggest change has been in Sean himself. He is now in part-time employment, with incredibly supportive employers. He works towards his holidays, learning money management skills along the way. He has a newfound confidence in himself, and a new lease on life.

"I love travelling and I now have the freedom to travel with a group of friends, completely independent of my parents."

Caroline sees it as having made a profound difference. "[For all of us], it feels like being an asthmatic who's run out of inhaler and who's finally gotten a new one. It's a lifeline," says Caroline.

Rosemary Connolly, the mother of club member Kim, tells a similar story. "I have three kids and Kim is the youngest, and I always felt it was such a pity that there was nothing for Kim and her friends like there was for my other children."

Rosemary, too, felt the same guilt as Caroline surrounding holidays. It was hard for her to go away, knowing that Kim couldn't. Now, knowing that Kim is off on her own, Rosemary feels free to take little breaks by herself.

For her part, Kim loves the singing and dancing, the sleepovers, the hot sun (when they leave Ireland) and getting to spend time with her friends.

For her mother, that last enjoyment – the camaraderie – is the most important part of Munster Great Escapes. It, she knows,

enables Kim to become more independent and allows her to act by herself. When on the tours, "[Kim's] gone with a group, but she's independent of family. She doesn't see the volunteers as being there as her minders. She just feels like they're all off on a holiday."

And that makes all the difference.

## BIGGEST CONCERN

Rosemary's biggest concern is that the sacrifices of the volunteers can sometimes go unnoticed. The volunteers who give up their time – with no recompense – in order to organise trips can be unrecognised and underappreciated.

Caroline knows the value of the club to families like hers and Rosemary's, and, like Rosemary, hopes that it will get the support it needs.



She has one simple reason for that. "[The volunteers are] little saints. They're brilliant. "They're Ireland's unsung heroes."

**For more information, contact Kirsty Tobin, Avondhu Blackwater Partnership, The Showgrounds, Fermoy, Co. Cork. T: 025-33411.**

## THE UNSUNG HEROES



*Kim Connolly and Christina McSweeney of the 'Munster Great Escapes' group relaxing over a cup of tea.*

There are currently eight volunteers on the books at Munster Great Escapes, with a further six waiting in the wings – their future involvement depends on the outcome of Garda vetting procedures.

Caitriona Campbell always says that the volunteers are integral to the club's successes: "Their energy and commitment has enabled us to do so much."

The volunteers are almost like a family, supporting each other through the work, helping each other (as well as the members) to learn and grow. They are very much a team.

Ideally, though, they need some outside funding – a way to enable them to continue working as a team without increasing the cost for members. That is something that they will need to source and secure as the club continues to grow.

# Literacy learning in communities

## DUBLIN ADULT LEARNERS COOK UP CASH FOR SYRIA



### ROBERT MCNAMARA REPORTS

A group of 15 women with literacy difficulties who returned to education wrote, edited and designed a book which raised over €2,000 for charity while achieving more than double the academic credits required of them.

The 'Goodwill Cookbook' was the unexpected result of the 'Women In Lifelong Learning' (WILL) programme supported by Dublin Southside Partnership Local Employment Service (LES).

The group was inspired to use their newly acquired skills and culinary nous for charitable gain by a talk from a member of the 'Jasmine Tent For Syrian Women' charity – which provides educational and emotional supports for women in Syria.

They decided to invest their time and effort into fundraising for the project and devised simple recipes for out of the ordinary meals.

The book has been so successful that it is now in its third print run.

The objective of the WILL programme was to provide a positive learning space where women would undertake personal development training together with a range of certified training modules and complete work experience.

The National Adult Literacy Agency's 'writeon.ie' learning service was utilised in addition to an on-site tutor and the combination showed great results:

The highly motivated group of women not only successfully completed the course modules, but more than three quarters of the learners completed further modules of training outside of course time.

The course expectation was for the class to collectively achieve 45 credits: They achieved more than double that at 121.

"Once there's the confidence of the tutor based learning through 'writeon.ie' and the blended learning approach, it facilitates people to have the confidence to go further themselves. It was a very empowering experience," said Fiona Burke of Southside LES in Monkstown Farm, Co. Dublin.

A survey of adults by the OECD shows that about one in six Irish adults are at, or below, the lowest levels on the literacy scale.

A social stigma still exists around literacy and people can be reluctant to speak publicly about it. One successful participant on the WILL programme said: "The programme was totally life changing and brought me from where I was isolated and stuck, beyond my rules of the past into the belief and competence that I didn't

realise I had. It gave me an awareness of myself and that I was responsible for myself. I was expected at a young age to comply with the family, the

system and authority. I now realise that decisions are mine, I can determine and plan my own future."

"The key benefit of the course is that I can identify that I am at a new start in my life, with possibilities and now I can contribute positively to society," she added.

The programme was funded by the Department of Justice and Equality under the EU's Equality for Women Measure (EWM) and organised and supported by partners Southside LES and Southside Partnership DLR in Blackrock.

**To buy the cookbook (€5) or find out more, email: [fiona.burke@southsideles.com](mailto:fiona.burke@southsideles.com)**

*"The programme was totally life changing... I was isolated and stuck. Now, I can plan my own future."*

### Writeon.ie perfect for local groups

Writeon.ie is an online solution for community groups who want to provide literacy skills training at Levels 2 and 3 accreditation without becoming a registered provider.

Using the online service, groups can forgo the need to implement a vast array of policies and procedures to validate the programme which can take up to a year.

It was pioneered by the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA).

Tom O'Mara, NALA's distance learning co-ordinator says: "Community groups can use Writeon.ie and not have to partake in a huge amount of organisation. The only stipulation is that they register with us, attend our free three-hour training event and adhere to our terms and conditions."

"It saves community groups huge amount of time and gives them access to accreditation they normally wouldn't have," he adds.

For more information community groups should email [distance@nala.ie](mailto:distance@nala.ie). Individuals who want to use the service can ring 1800 20 20 65 or freetext 50050.

### www.writeon.ie stats

- 61,500 people used the service in 2013
- They spent an average of 22 minutes using its programmes
- Currently 82 centres are registered with 'writeon.ie'
- 180 centres and community groups have used the service since 2008.





## NEWS

# LIMERICK SENIORS CALL FOR UNANNOUNCED INSPECTIONS

- World Elder Abuse Awareness Day marked on June 15th

**W**orld Elder Abuse Awareness Day took place on June 15th and was marked in Limerick by calls for unannounced checks to uncover rogue nursing homes amid claims that incidents of elder abuse are on the increase.

"What we don't agree with is that when an inspection takes place, the home is given a time and date. All inspections should be unannounced. Even when they're given advance warnings, some of these homes still don't come up to standard," said Oliver Creighton of the Limerick Seniors Forum.

Limerick Seniors Forum now has 500 members across city and county and it held an information event on elder abuse on June 15th.

"Many elderly people don't want to talk about what is happening because it may be their own children who are abusing them and people don't want to admit that. But there is help available," said

Oliver.

Seniors' forums have been established in many other counties and all seek to highlight issues for older people and are open to anyone aged over 55.

At a recent Limerick Seniors event, Gerry McLoughlin, former mayor, urged people to contribute, whatever their age, and said it was key that people spoke for the forum in political circles.

"We aim to be heard and to make a difference," said Claire Gallery of the PAUL Partnership which supports the initiative.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) was first established by the United Nations five years ago in an effort to raise public awareness about elder abuse in its many forms; physical, sexual, psychological, financial, discriminatory and neglect by omission or commission.

W: [www.hse.ie/elderabuse/](http://www.hse.ie/elderabuse/)



## Campaign victory over LTIS

**P**AUL Partnership board member, Frank McDonnell (pictured) received accolades recently when he revealed at a Limerick Seniors Forum event that he played a part in helping to force the Government's hand over the Long-Term Illness Scheme (LTIS).

While medicines were available free of charge to most people with a long-term illness, those with a medical card were being charged a levy of €2.50 per item.

Now, medical card holders can apply to the LTIS and receive approved medicines and devices for treatment of their specified illness free of charge.

The Government also promised to pay refunds to those who paid the charges. Frank had been part of the nationwide campaign to lobby the Government for this change.

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

## UPCOMING U.N. DAYS (SELECTION)

- 20 June - World Refugee Day
- 26 June - International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking
- 26 June - United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture
- 5 July (First Saturday in July) - International Day of Cooperatives
- 18 July - Nelson Mandela International Day
- 12 August - International Youth Day
- 9 August - World Humanitarian Day
- 8 September - International Literacy Day [UNESCO]
- 15 September - International Day of Democracy
- 21 September - International Day of Peace

Source: <http://www.un.org/en/events/observances/days.shtml>



# QUIZ TIME!

## PUT THE KETTLE ON AND GET YOUR THINKING CAP ON! IT'S TIME TO TEST HOW WELL UP YOU ARE ON CIVIL SOCIETY NEWS



**THINK YOU KNOW DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES?  
HAVE YOU BEEN PAYING ATTENTION TO CURRENT AFFAIRS?**

**THIS MIX OF TRICKY QUESTIONS WILL TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND REVEAL SOME SURPRISING ANSWERS. STICK THE KETTLE ON AND GET OUT THE THINKING CAP - YOU'RE GOING TO NEED IT!**

- 1) Animal husbandry charity Bothar let go a third of staff in May following a decline in donations. It blamed the controversy over Rehab. TRUE or FALSE?
- 2) Ireland was placed 9th best of 39 developed countries for our education system in a recent survey. T/F?
- 3) State funding to the Community & Voluntary Sector has been cut since 2008 by (a) 30% (b) 35% or (c) 40%.
- 4) Ireland allows prisoners the right to vote. TRUE or FALSE?
- 5) The number of companies funded through the LCDP is 50. TRUE or FALSE?
- 6) This year is the EU Year of Reconciling Work and Family Life. TRUE or FALSE?
- 7) The unemployment rate in Ireland has fallen in the past year. TRUE or FALSE?
- 8) The successor programme to the LCDP will be called the Social Inclusion Activation Programme (SIAP). TRUE or FALSE?
- 9) There are now more obese people in the world than there are hungry or starving people. TRUE or FALSE?
- 10) Over 11,000 jobs were created by LCDP supported new businesses in 2012 and 2013. TRUE or FALSE?

### Answers:

1. True
2. True (Source: Merrion Street)
3. (c)
4. True. Ireland has allowed prisoners to vote since 2006. Britain, Bulgaria, Hungary, Russia and Estonia do not.
5. False. The answer is closer to 75. There are 25 community-focused projects including 'Changing Ireland' funded alongside 50 Local Development Companies.
6. True
7. True. It's down to approximately 12%.
8. False: It will be called the SICAP. The "C" stands for "Community".
9. True
10. True

### Scoring:

1-3 points – Buy the national papers, register for your local library and for the love of God watch the six-one news once in a while!

4-6 points – Good, but could do better.

7-9 points – Very good, you're clued up and tough to catch out.

10 points – Are you Bryan Dobson in disguise? Join Tascnet immediately.



**EXCLUSIVE!**

# MAJOR ANNOUNCEMENT: INISHBOFIN CHOSEN TO HOST COUNTRY'S 'ONE STOP SHOP'



A reliable candidate has been recruited to man the new 'One-Stop Shop' for all community needs in the Republic of Ireland.

This will end for once and for all the awful duplication going on in publicly-funded community projects across the country. Quangos I call them.

The appointed person - actually myself Horace McDermott, I was surprised too - will handle applications from individuals and communities nationwide.

As part of my induction, I've just completed a six-month Advanced Diploma in Pobalese and have moved out to Inishbofin where the office will be based.

## DEDICATED SERVICE

Since the One Stop Shop is piloting a scheme whereby it operates without an internet connection, applicants must present in person.

The office will have an open-door policy: Doors open between the hours

of 10am-12noon on the first Tuesday of the month. First come, first served. Put the kettle on if I'm running late.

Our dedicated ferry service for applicants runs from Cleggan on Wednesdays only - it was part of the terms and conditions insisted on by the islanders, each of whom has now opened a hotel.

## BOOK LESSONS NOW!

This means community representatives from around the country will get six days to enjoy the island's many leisure activities which for 2014 now also include beach-rebuilding, pothole-counting and pier-lamenting. Some applicants may prefer to 'sing for their supper' rather than address me in Pobalese and Andrew Murray is available for singing lessons. Early booking advised.

## BEST PRACTICE IN JAPAN

The move to a single One Stop Shop for the country is in line with best practice internationally (eg the Japanese Empire in the 1500s) and it has the backing of the Troika and the Department of Infinite Wisdom.\*

Community grants are of course available, with first preference going to groups who can provide company records that show they've been in existence since the time of the last famine. Funding will be immediately doubled for any group that presents documents from the years when they were burnt to a cinder during the Civil War. That is, provided that the original person who set up the group is part of

the delegation making the application.

## APPLY IN CANT

As is sure to one day become standard practice, applications must be written out in each of the official EU languages and in Cant, Braille and triplicate (to avoid duplication). No favouritism will be shown to anyone who makes their application on the back of the receipt presented on payment of your bill after a stay in my best mate's hotel.

In regard to community grants, only applications from groups faced with an 80% cut to current funding levels can be considered. New applications for funding are welcome: I've a corner kept for them and will go through them after 2024.

## A BEACON FOR INCLUSIVITY

I'm told the One Stop Shop will stand (depending on the weather and how quick Galway County Council are in doing repairs) as a beacon for equality, inclusiveness and openness. On the openness bit, I will need a break, so the office will be open all year round except for the winter months (ie from September to June).

The answer is and always has been a One Stop Shop and now you know where it is. If you don't, hey no worries, see ya on the mainland in September.

*\* Experts estimate the One-Stop Shop will directly create one (part-time) job and indirectly create 539 jobs in construction and tourism on the island.*



(Left): Horace says it's not all hardship on Inishbofin.



(Right): Two community reps trying to find Horace's office.

# RESOURCE SECTION

## DO YOU KNOW THE 9 GROUNDS OF UNLAWFUL DISCRIMINATION?

Cork Traveller groups' poster & leaflet explain the legislation clearly

Community organisations nationwide, including LCDP-funded companies, have been invited to take, use and adapt a specially-designed leaflet and poster highlighting the '9 Grounds of Equality' that apply to every citizen.

Four HSE-funded community projects in Cork collaborated to produce the resources: the Traveller Visibility Group, West Cork Travellers, the Cork Gay Project and 'LINC'.

The two Traveller projects were until 2009 part of the Community Development Programme, while the LCDP funds 14 other Traveller Community Development Projects nationwide through Pavee Point.

"Limited copies of the leaflet and poster have been published but any group, including those in the Local and Community Development Programme, interested in reprinting copies are invited to get in touch," said Evie Finlay.

The poster and leaflet were designed by Naomi Fein.

Minister Kathleen Lynch performed the official launch on June 16th, as part of Traveller Pride Week 2014. The Week is an annual event that highlights, celebrates and showcases Travellers' contribution to Irish society, with events taking place nationwide. It also provides an opportunity to highlight many of the issues facing Travellers.

E: [westcorkphc@gmail.com](mailto:westcorkphc@gmail.com)  
T: 023-8835039.



## YOUTHWORK: WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

- 2 new free online guidebooks published



Two new, freely-available, online guidebooks have been launched that make youth work and the theory behind it easy-to-understand.

One of the guidebooks is about theory, the other about practice and they cover everything from the bottom-up approach and empowerment to experiential learning and evidence-based practice.

Written in an at-times jazzy style, the guides include ample graphics and links to further reading online. In short of 40 pages, each makes clear the links between theory and practice and are aimed at students and practitioners.

They were developed by Dr John Bamber with support and assistance from local and international colleagues, including contributions from a working group led by the City of Dublin Youth Service Board.

"It's a free, flexible, practical new resource in which the theory underpinning youth work meets practice," he says.

The 'Ideas In Action In Youth Work' guidebooks are published by the Centre for Effective Service. Link: <http://bit.ly/SJE3We>



## *Once-shy Vivien addresses EU guests in Dublin*

Once-shy Vivien Whelan, a member of Wexford's Youth Action Project, accepted an invitation to address visitors from Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy and Slovenia during an European forum on youth unemployment.

Her opinion piece about being young, educated, unemployed and angry, published in our spring edition, was spotted by organisers, Voluntary Service International.

The forum took place on May 7th in the EU offices in Dublin and Vivien was joined onstage by YAP's Stephen Doyle, who contributed a report to our 'Winter 2013/'14' edition. The pair have since taken part in a documentary about Wexford Local Development which helped set up YAP.

## *Clondalkin horse project secures land*

The hard work by Roisin Kearney and her fellow volunteers in Clondalkin Equine Club (CEC) has paid off.

Or as Roisin puts it, "Now the hard work really begins."

"We're over the moon, we got the lease for the lands, it's been signed," she reported.

For over a year, the CEC had sought land for the project. The lease of 28 acres in Clondalkin from a private landowner will be for just short of five years.

Earlier, following coverage in this magazine ten months ago, Roisin organised the first ever national meeting of those interested in social horse projects. Groups who attended came from counties Kerry, Tipperary, Kilkenny, Offaly, Laois, Limerick, Dublin, along with

the Irish Horse Welfare Trust, and an alliance has been formed.

The meeting took place in the offices of the Tullamore Travellers Movement which is part-funded by the LCDP.

The CEC is supported by South Dublin Partnership.

## *Wicklow's computer whizzes*

A group of women in Bray celebrated their success recently on being presented with their European Computer Driving Licences. They are among 450 women to have received free training over the past four years from the Bray Area Partnership. The company provides training for local women to help them get employment.

The work is funded under the Equality for Women Measure.

## *Maynooth's communities conference*

NUI Maynooth held a conference on June 13-14th that addressed 'State funding, partnership and democracy'.

It included a contribution from Anna Visser of the Equality Studies Centre, UCD, who asked 'Does state funding of Civil Society Organisations advocacy enhance or undermine democracy?'

Brian Harvey talked about organisations in receipt of State funding and the extent to which they express dissent.

John Evoy of the Irish Men's shed Association also spoke along with speakers from citizen movements in Britain, Spain and Greece.

## *Oxfam moves South*

Trendsetting international NGO Oxfam is to move its headquarters from Oxford in England to either Bangkok or Nairobi.

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### **For additional information, please contact:**

Dr. Olive McCarthy, Centre for Co-operative Studies,  
University College Cork.

E: o.mccarthy@ucc.ie

T: 021-4903354

or log on to [www.ucc.ie/en/ckp01/](http://www.ucc.ie/en/ckp01/) for further details.

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Further information on this programme is available on our online prospectus at [www.ucc.ie/en/CKE75](http://www.ucc.ie/en/CKE75), or by contacting **Féilim Ó hAdhmaill**, at the School of Applied Social Studies, U.C.C.

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or log on to [www.ucc.ie/en/ckl10/](http://www.ucc.ie/en/ckl10/) for further details.

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