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# CHANGING IRELAND

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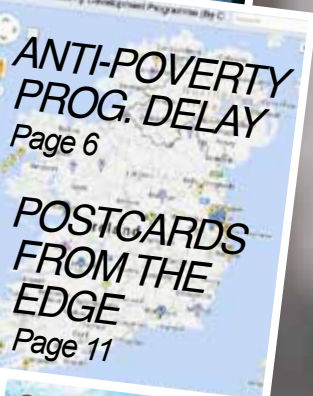
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#### **Let's go stone mad together!**

*Pictured (l to r) by the dry stone wall they built in the Jura Mountains, Switzerland: Viv Sadd (Cork & Wales), David Ahern (Cork), Dean McCullough (Belfast), Sinead McKenna (Belfast) and Shane O'Sullivan (Cork).*



Dry stonewall building is an ancient traditional handcraft that involves building without cement.

Dry Stonewalls have been built in different countries and cultures such as the Swiss mountains, the green fields of Ireland and in the dry regions of the Middle-East.

In recent years, these old almost forgotten skills have been rediscovered in Switzerland as an ecological and sustainable method to maintain the mountain regions and protect its cultural character.

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*Bluebell Angling Club members Paul Dooran & Dylan O'Connell.*

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Minister Alan Kelly pictured in Nenagh, Co. Tipperary. Photo by **Tony Grehan Photography and Video** (via Facebook). Community rates apply. M: 087-1345988.



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Environment, Community and Local Government

## 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 is due to conclude on March 31st, 2015, to be followed from April 1st by the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme which builds on the LCDP's success.

For more information, see page 6.

## New Minister, fresh hopes; honeymoon begins



Expect to see a pick-up in morale across the Community Sector – and ultimately, one hopes, within communities – with the appointment of Alan Kelly as the new Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government.

While he will continue to implement Government policy that is having major impacts across the Community Sector, he brings a fresh approach and will put his own

shape on what unfolds from now on.

He has urged his officials not to “go into silos” and promises the same goes for himself.

Already, the mood music has changed: Minister Kelly has met with groups who had fallen out with his predecessor.

With the economy (putting aside our debts) on the up, Dublin (or parts of it) rising once again and rural areas expecting a lift, disadvantaged communities and people on the margins of society absolutely deserve more support.

As the unveiling of Budget 2015 showed, the era of cuts seems to finally be at an end. This is most welcome – cuts have rolled this way without break since 2007.

Kelly comes from a rural village that he says shaped his outlook on life and motivates him to ensure he does a good job of looking after the ‘Community’ section of his portfolio. He seems to genuinely have communities’ interests at heart.

Previous ministers have left a vacuum – if not a sour taste – where there was ample shape to impress and provide

leadership, even as cuts were implemented. Often they were distracted by other elements of their portfolios.

Kelly knows time is short – 18 months perhaps until the next general election – but he has been walking the talk, meeting community leaders. He has spoken up for the rights of workers, for instance strikers at a waste disposal firm in Dublin.

Goodwill exists across the Community Sector and within communities to work with someone who is progressive, who listens and truly values all that volunteers, workers and groups in the Community Sector do. The goodwill is there to be tapped.

Will the Government leave a legacy that communities will appreciate in the years to come, or will water charges and cutbacks be remembered above all else? The Minister has a short while to muse over this, until the Spring when he oversees the introduction of the new Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme.

Check out our interview with Minister Kelly (pages 4-5). We’ll see after one year how the Minister lived up to expectations.

The honeymoon begins!

*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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### Disclaimer

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# KELLY SAYS HIS HEART I

## -“I’m very pro-community... I wa

### Interview by Allen Meagher

“I’m very pro-community. I come from a little village in Tipperary called Portroe, one of the best little villages in Ireland and it’s very important for me to promote community work and community values and volunteerism and the way people pull together to create a good society locally,” says Alan Kelly who was appointed Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government in the cabinet reshuffle in July.

The 39-year-old previously served as Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and was Labour MEP for Munster prior to that.

“There’s a very strong emphasis in the Government on community and that’s going to be the case for my duration in the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.

“While there’s a lot of change in the structures, I think change should be seen in a positive light.

“I’ve met with many groups and representatives from across the country and I’ve taken a fresh approach to how we should see community groups being treated, particularly Local Development Companies.

“In effect, I know many of the groups very well. In my previous role I was over Rural Transport, which was run through the LEADER companies. We were able to make significant changes there in a very positive way and get greater integration.

### COMMUNICATION NEEDS TO IMPROVE, BOTH WAYS

“I think communication needs to improve, both ways - from the bottom up and the top down - and I guarantee you that is going to happen. If you ask the groups that I’ve met, they’d sense that that’s already happening.

“There needs to be a spirit of co-operation and we all need to pull the right way in the same direction because collectively we can get more services into areas.”

“I’m very progressive. I like to see positive change, I don’t think things should stand still. But I also don’t believe people should go into silos. And when I say that, I mean that I don’t think Alan Kelly should go into a silo, nor Local Development Companies, nor my department officials.

“We all need to come out and communicate better, and by doing so I already know - from the talks I’ve had - that many development companies are in a much more comfortable, positive space in the past few weeks and I will ensure that continues to happen.”

### NO, NOT MORE BUREAUCRACY

“There is a role for local authorities and that will be manifested in the way structures will be created. But having said that, my ambition is to ensure that local people make decisions, that communities make their own decisions and that people who come together with good ideas are supported. It’s my ambition not to make more bureaucracy.

“The process should support groups. It’s not about turning it



Minister Alan Kelly in Nenagh, Co. Tipperary. Photo: Tony Grehan Photography.

into a bureaucratic challenge for local groups who have good ideas to support their communities only to be told they can’t do them,” said the Minister.

He said he wished to ensure groups got the support they needed “even quicker than before”.

“We do from a funding point of view have to work with Europe – funding comes from many different streams, that being one of them - and we have to work within the regulatory framework that’s there.”

“Having said that, it’s my ambition to support Local Development Companies in as many ways as we can because I believe they do essential work.”

“The work that Local Development Companies do must be embellished by other work across Government.”

### SPECIFIC AREA SUPPORTS

“In the future, I want to see the work done in specific areas. It’s crucial that – say from a rural development point of view, if a particular area has a tourism need, let’s support that. In other areas it might be social requirements, in other areas it could be something else.

“We need to be defined and strict, but in a way that promotes



# S IN COMMUNITY WORK

## nt to make a good job of (this)."

what's necessary in each individual area.

"Long-term, I believe the process and changes underway will have a very positive impact, particularly in social and rural areas," he said.

He pointed to a report launched in April by An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny: 'Energising Ireland's Rural Economy' was published by the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA).

Pat Spillane chaired CEDRA and the Minister said he "put his heart and soul into it." He wished to congratulate Pat on "a fantastic piece of work, one of the best pieces of work I've seen."

"Certainly, the work that the various Local Development Companies will do in the future can compliment the Government strategy in relation to CEDRA and I want to facilitate that. By coming together in that way, we can hopefully deliver better results, particularly for rural Ireland."

He pointed out that the appointment of a new Minister for Rural Development, Ann Phelan, "adds significantly to our focus on developing rural Ireland."

### WALKING UP THE HILL A TRADITION

The Minister comes from a small yet formidable rural community:

"Lough Derg is Ireland's hidden secret, a fantastic part of the world. I'm from Portroe (on the Tipperary side of the lake) - the village made famous by Liam Sheedy\*, Aoife Kelly\*\* and now Dara Gleeson and others. I'm very proud of it. It has a very small population and yes - in Portroe, if we win anything we walk up the hill," he said. Traffic has to give way on these occasions.

"It's a great little community, a fantastic place to live in and to

have grown up in.

"The people you are around when growing up socialise you and frame you for the rest of your life and the sense of community in my village shaped my views and my beliefs. I would actually say that's why I'm so strong on community and that's why I want to make a good job of it."

### ENDING THE CUTS

Asked - prior to the budget for 2015 being announced - if he could put an end to the cuts to groups operating in the Community and Voluntary Sector, he said he would do everything he could "to protect and promote the Community Sector".

"It harnesses an awful lot of good and we get great value from it from a society point of view," he added.

### TRAVELLERS & WOMEN'S GROUPS

Asked what the future held in particular for small community groups focused on women and Travellers among others - all hoping that core-funding support will be continued - he said:

"There's a two-stage process underway and stage one is completed. All I can say is that the Department will be re-examining this to see if the issues as outlined by the groups can be addressed. It needs to be dissected and once it is dissected I will ensure that the fairest results possible will happen."

\* Liam Sheedy is a former Tipperary hurler and was manager of the Tipperary Hurling team that won the All-Ireland in 2010.

\*\* Aoife Kelly won the Rose of Tralee in 2008.

## SPORTS "FANATIC" WITH NO TIME FOR FICTION

**Minister Kelly - or Alan as he prefers to be called - studied in UCC, UCD and Boston College, later becoming e-business manager for Bord Failte and Failte Ireland. In between, he worked in press offices and in journalism.**

"The last article I ever wrote as a journalist predicted that Jan O'Sullivan was going to win the 1998 by-election in Limerick. I sent in my report to the 'Limerick Echo', then put away my journalistic credentials, put on a 'Vote Jan O'Sullivan' sticker and went out canvassing for her. And that was that.

"I still have a copy of the article in my office, it's framed," he said.

He describes himself as a sports fanatic.

"I'll watch any sport. I played hurling and football for Portroe and I played rugby for Nenagh. I play a bit of golf.

"I read a lot of books, but it's all non-fiction. I don't read fiction, I don't have time. I believe that there's too much to

learn about the world than to be reading about stuff that never happened."

"I've no hobbies as such," he says.

What free time he has, he spends with his wife Regina and their two young children - Aoibhe (4) and Senan (2).



Minister Kelly, Regina and their two children.



He quit journalism to join Jan O'Sullivan's campaign.

# NEW COMMUNITY PROGRAMME LAUNCH DELAYED UNTIL SPRING '15

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

**T**he launch of the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) has been delayed for three months. It will form the mainstay of the Government's efforts over the coming years to stem poverty and support those who are long-term unemployed or otherwise marginalised.

It is to replace the €48m Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) through which 400 people approx. are employed in communities nationwide supporting people in 18 socially excluded target groups.

Under SICAP, the funding will be administered by new Local Community Development Committees, arguably (claims the Government) providing better value than offered currently by volunteer-managed, local development companies. In a significant move that turns social inclusion work into a commodity, private companies can compete for SICAP's social inclusion contracts.

Stage 1 (registration) is complete, but the deadline for proceeding with Stage 2 was moved from October 1st to December 19th.

The delay means that a small element of the cost-savings promised - somewhat sketchily - by former minister Phil Hogan may be lost.

SICAP promises greater efficiency, reduced duplication, lower costs and stronger local democracy, although the Irish Local Development Network, SIPTU and some academics says it will cost more and weakens civil society.

Some community leaders intimidated to 'Changing Ireland' that they felt a complex process was being rushed and foresaw a delay with SICAP's rollout. Meanwhile, talks which had broken down under former Minister Hogan's stewardship have now picked up with the appointment of Alan Kelly as Minister.

Due to the slower-than-envisaged rollout of Stage 2, the LCDP - the current programme for social inclusion - will now be extended and most if not all companies operating under the Programme will be funded through to March 31st, 2015.

However, a few companies remain in limbo (see page 11).

It is understood that parliamentary questions have been submitted over this and related matters.

## FUNDING RESULTS BY FEB 9TH, 2015

- Applicants companies that entered Stage 1 (registration) were informed on September 24th if they were successful or not. The list has not been published, but 'Changing Ireland' understands that all LDCs got through Stage 1. They next enter Stage 2 where they will compete with newcomers to the "market" that are competing for some of the "lots". Results due: February 9th, 2015.

- There was a provision within the legislation to allow the Government to abandon the SICAP tendering process if it saw fit to. However, the process is now underway.

- In talking about his legacy prior to leaving office, the impression given by the previous minister, now EU Commissioner, Phil Hogan, was that the process was all but complete.

## COUNTY "LOTS" & "SUB-LOTS"

- Most of the new Local and Community Development Committees (LCDCs) have met and begun work to aid the rollout of SICAP. A few of these newly formed committees still had to meet by September, while some committees were slow in agreeing on whether or not to divide their lots (typically counties) into sub-lots. Different LCDCs have taken different approaches, with some opting to divide up their lot and others not.

## FUNDING REFUSED, PARTLY RESTORED

- Companies that were encouraged to apply to another scheme for funding - called the Special Scheme for National Organisations - found the €8m pot was too small and only 55 of 157 applicants were awarded funding. The Taoiseach was obliged to address the matter when outrage was expressed after 26 disability organisations sharing €1.2m per annum were refused funding: They were given another year's funding along with eight other groups until a long-term solution is found. It was one of the first moves made by Alan Kelly in his new role as Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government.

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



Custom House, Dublin, home to the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, as viewed from Liberty Hall. Photo by AM.

## PROGRAMME AMBITION

**T**he new SICAP programme promises much, including for example:

- Greater participation by members of disadvantaged groups and communities in a community development context.
- Improved supports for those who have left school early.
- Increased employment rates.
- Increased and improved joint planning and delivery between local service providers and statutory agencies leading to more joined-up pathways for people.

For full details, see our Summer edition (online) or visit our website or the Pobal website.



# WALL-BUILDERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

"I usually only mix with Protestants", said young Dean McCullough from Belfast.

Dean typified the narrow experience of 20 youngsters – four from the island of Ireland, along with others from Switzerland, Palestine and Israel – who took part in an intercultural exchange in the Swiss Jura Mountains this summer.

For ten days this summer while Israel and Palestine were at war and while Orangemen marched in Ireland to celebrate the defeat by Protestant King William of Catholic King James II over 300 years ago, Dean and others built a dry-stone wall laden with symbolism.

The weather couldn't have been any more challenging, being the coldest and wettest summer in 37 years in Switzerland.

Among the community workers leading the exchange was Welsh-native, Viv Sadd\*, co-ordinator of Mahon CDP in Cork city.

Viv organised the four-person contingent from Ireland which included David Ahern and Shane O'Sullivan from Mahon, Cork, and Sinead McKenna and Dean from Belfast.

"The young people learned drystone wall-building techniques the hard way, by building a farm-wall by themselves in the mountains," he said. "They had to work closely together which is what we wanted."

"The basic idea of the Youth Exchange was not just to spend time in the Swiss mountains building stone walls, but also to support the intercultural learning between people from the Ocean side (Ireland), the mountain regions (Switzerland) and the desert region (Israel and

Palestine)," he said.

Each day, there were also intercultural and personal development activities.

David Ahern most appreciated the outdoors, environmental focus of the exchange, with everyone proud of what was achieved. As Shane O'Sullivan put it, "It's great to think that we helped to build something that will still be visible and in use in a hundred years' time."

"Great friendships were formed," said Sinead McKenna.

Participants had plenty of time to get to know each other. Each day, they had to walk two miles uphill – often in cold and foggy conditions – to reach the site and they were given questions to discuss as they walked to work. They were asked, for example, to find out how their counterparts spent Saturday nights, or to discuss how love is expressed in different cultures.

Work on the wall was supervised by expert dry-stone-wall builders, but the young people had to do the hard graft.

As the days progressed, the youngsters bonded – some romantically – and instead of it being a case of "Don't mention the war", it became a case of "Don't mention the wall!"

Pride was evident in what they achieved and a small plaque on the completed wall marks the spot where they met in the summer of 2014.

Dean McCullough said afterwards, "This was a new experience for me. It really opened my eyes mixing with the Catholic young people and also the Muslim and Jewish young people. I definitely want to do more travelling now."

Dean wasn't the only one bitten by the travel bug in the Jura Mountains.

David said, "Myself and Shane have already booked our tickets to go back to



*Viv (standing) from Ireland and Yarra (centre) from Switzerland at work in the Jura Mountains.*

Switzerland."

"It was brilliant up there," he continued. "Besides building the wall, I like cooking and I learned how to make traditional dishes from the other countries."

David and Shane are both members of Mahon CDP's 'Young Unemployed Mens Cooking Group' which meets weekly and teaches young men how to prepare healthy affordable meals and cater for local community events. Funding for the tutor for this group is received through Cork City Partnership to cover Education and Training Board hours.

A number of young men have progressed from this group into fulltime employment in the catering industry; local boy Rhys Ahern was the first to graduate recently as a fully qualified chef.

The 'Building Walls - Breaking Walls' youth exchange was funded through the European Union's Youth in Action programme.

**\* Viv Sadd is a founding member of 'Changing Ireland' magazine and serves on the voluntary board of directors.**

*BELOW Exchange participants pictured (l to r) from Palestine (two), Switzerland, Cork and Israel.*





# Unemployed win enterprise awards

## FROM A HOUSE IN DONEGAL TO THE DEPARTURE LOUNGE OF DUBLIN AIRPORT

BY BEN PANTER

Top prize of €1,250 and a crystal glass trophy went to an unusual high-tech business venture, uPilot Teoranta.

The Donegal based business - set-up by John Paul Boyle & Kevin Boyle, no relation - four months ago won the award to the surprise of its founders.

"I said to my business partner Kevin Boyle that if we won a runner-up prize we'd have a few drinks and when we saw the line-up we thought we had no chance. It was great to be recognised."

The company currently operates a B737-800 flight simulator in Dublin Airport's Terminal 2. People passing through can now experience flying a jet, while trainee pilots can use it for interview preparation.

"Since 9/11, the cockpit doors have been closed to the public - we open them up again," said John Paul.

It costs €45 for 15 minutes, with a 5-minute briefing beforehand

Donegal's Majella O'Donnell, wife of country star Daniel, tried it out and said it was "very nerve racking but great fun."

Children can even try it.

The company recently sold its first flight simulator and the latest business request it received is for a ship simulator.

John Paul's interest in aviation goes back to childhood: "Dad had old war comics with aircraft from WWII and I was always looking at the airplanes." While employed in the construction industry, John Paul had been working towards getting his pilot's license, until that dream ended with the property crash.

He decided on a career change, availed of the Back To Education Programme, learnt IT skills in Letterkenny Institute of Technology and, on completing the course, he set about building his own small flight simulator at home.

Kevin is a childhood friend of John Paul's with a background in



"Nerve-wracking but fun," said Majella, pictured here with husband Daniel.

### 1st Place: uPilot Teoranta



John Paul Boyle and Kevin Boyle inside the cockpit simulator they built.

audio/visuals. It was the convenient combination of aviation, audio-visual and IT skills the men possessed that made it possible for them to design and manufacture the flight simulators.

The first one took two years of research and planning and six months to build. Parts were imported from America, France, Spain, Australia and the U.K.

They brought the cockpit simulator to a local school to give pupils a taste of the pilot experience, much to the youngsters' delight. They knew they had a potential business and embarked on their biggest challenge to date; building a 1:1 scale Boeing 737 Airliner flight simulator.

So who would be the typical customer for such a niche product?

John Paul said, "Corporate events organisers might look for a simplified version and then there are people looking to set up in shopping malls and home enthusiasts."

Winning the award has brought publicity for the fledgling business and it has featured on local and national radio, as well as hitting the public relations jackpot - 'Changing Ireland'.

John Paul takes a pragmatic approach to the firm's future saying he wants to "grow the business slowly" and is open-minded as to what direction the company will take in the future.

There are plans to hire up to four employees although getting people with the right skills and credentials to get security clearance in Dublin airport can be a challenge.

uPilot Teoranta is a remarkable and a worthy winner, that proves, yet again, the benefits of a bottom up approach to national economic recovery.

Changing Ireland wishes John-Paul, Evan and all the other contestants at the Border Regional Enterprise Awards all the best for the future.

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



# Unemployed win enterprise awards

## UNSTEADY JOBS DROVE DUO TO STRIKE OUT ON THEIR OWN

- 2nd place: *Crafty Kidz*

Second place and a cheque for €1,000 went to the Crafty Kidz Crèche in Monaghan town, **REPORTS BEN PANTER.**

Founded by business partners Claire McAteer and Eve McCabe in 2010, the business continues to grow.

"We started out with six children and now we have 120 children and employ 11 staff," said Claire.

While it may appear to have been a brave decision to set-up a business in the early days of a recession, it was actually the instability of the economy that drove Claire and Eve to making the leap.

Claire explains: "Eve and I worked together in a crèche, but our jobs

at the time were unsteady so we decided to set up our own business."

"We worked hard and built the business quickly, it was obvious that the service was needed in the area."

The crèche is currently expanding its building which involves renovation of another room.

Claire and Eve are also planning to introduce a healthy eating scheme to make sure the little people under their care are getting the best possible start in their journey through education.

Claire says their motto is to keep working hard, give people what they want and continue to improve all the time.

Great sentiments to build a business on.

## New Border Enterprise Awards

**The first ever Border Regional Enterprise Awards (BREA) were set up to highlight the achievements of new business start-ups by unemployed people.**

Covering the counties of Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth, the awards went to the top three of 21 worthy competitors.

The winners were announced in June by John Perry, then junior enterprise minister, while Norma Smurfit presented the awards.

Brendan O'Reilly, CEO of Breffni Integrated Development, commended everyone who participated.



*Claire McAteer and Eve McCabe won 2nd place in the inaugural Border Region Enterprise Awards for 2014. They are pictured here being presented with their award by John Perry, Minister of State with special responsibility for small businesses and Norma Smurfit, Microfinance Ireland, sponsor of the awards. Photo: Lorraine Teevan.*

## Ireland No. 1 in Europe for supporting entrepreneurship

A survey has placed Ireland in seventh place of 33 countries globally and number one in Europe when it comes to supporting entrepreneurship.

The top country for entrepreneurs is India while Japan comes last, according to the survey which was published in June.

The study measured the experiences, attitudes and opinions of people in 33 countries and examined levels of government support entrepreneurship.

It was conducted by Oracle Capital Group, a London-based company that provides financial services to wealthy families. Rich individuals from the most entrepreneurial countries are more likely to remain living there, the study claimed.

## 3 Good Reasons: - The added value of awards events

What value do the organisers place on investing in organising awards event such as the Border Regional Enterprise Awards? Was it about promoting the award winners or those helping them?

The answer is both, said **Terry Hyland, Enterprise Officer with Breffni Integrated Development:**

- "The awards highlight the achievements of individuals who were previously in a position of unemployment and social welfare dependency but progressed to a position of self-sufficiency and financial independence."

- "The awards also highlight the quality of businesses being established with the support of Local Development Companies in the border region which is often unnoticed in mainstream society and overlooked by central government departments."

- "The awards provided a medium to showcase the achievements of people who overcame great odds to become economic contributors in their local communities."

He added that LDCs are "delivering and supporting real change in tackling social exclusion and poverty in local communities across the border region."

Between 2010 and 2012, Local Development Companies helped 13,753 people progress into self-employment.

# Enterprise awards

## CLARE'S CASTLEBLANEY CAFÉ A JAMMY SUCCESS

### 3rd Place: Puddleduck Produce



Third place of €750 in the BREA awards went to Clare Hamill, founder of Puddleduck Produce, Castleblaney, Co. Monaghan.

The business was founded in 2011 after new mum Clare and her husband Declan decided that self-employment was the best way to return to the workforce after her maternity leave.

She produce her first jar of jam as a child-chef. Her company now produces chutneys, relishes and marmalade as well.

"The kitchen smells lovely on jam days, but terrible on chutney days when it stinks of vinegar," she said.

During the busy times of year, the firm can produce up to a thousand jars a week and it is planning to take on more staff in the run-up to Christmas.

With an order of four thousand jars of jam received the week 'Changing Ireland' spoke to her, Clare has certainly turned her childhood hobby into a real winner.

A café the couple set up on the back of their success in jam-making is also benefitting the community.

The café hosts knitting and art workshops which Clare describes as "something for the community."

On the publicity the award brought, she said: "I was delighted to win the award because we're a food business and we tend to struggle against the more high-tech businesses."

She added, "There were two women in the top three, so it was nice to get that recognition."



Clare Hamill, founder of Puddleduck Produce, won 3rd place in the Border Region Enterprise Awards. She was presented with her award by Minister of State John Perry and Norma Smurfit, Microfinance Ireland, sponsor of the awards. Photo: Lorraine Teevan.

## National seminar on Self-Employment

Pobal organised a seminar in June for Local Development Companies, each of which is engaged in providing support to people seeking to set up in self-employment.

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

This is one of the unrivalled achievements of the Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) as highlighted in a report published last year by Pobal titled 'Supporting Inclusion Through Self-Employment'. (See 'Changing Ireland', pages 12-15, Autumn 2013 edition).

The seminar held in Dublin in June was organised as a follow-up. Speakers included Michael Bowe from the Irish Local Development Network, Clodagh McDonnell from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, and Shane Reynolds from the Department of Social Protection.

Aileen Gilchrist from Pobal presented the report's key findings. There were also contributions from LDCs representatives based in Cork, Donegal, Mayo, Monaghan, Kildare and South Dublin.

The 108-page report is available for download at: <http://bit.ly/19Gwlho>.

## NEWS BRIEFS

### BOOK LAUNCHED

Oct 17th Eradication of Poverty event in Dublin

The Irish Local Development Network hosted an anti-poverty and social inclusion showcase event in Dublin on Friday, October 17th.

The event – funded by the Department of Social Protection – took place in conjunction with the UN International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

Speakers addressed poverty and social exclusion from a European, national and local perspective.

A booklet outlining the work Local Development Companies are doing to help reduce poverty and social exclusion in Ireland was launched on the day.

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

### VISION TO REALITY

14 graduate in Westmeath  
– 10 setting up businesses

On September 1st, 14 graduates of a programme with Westmeath Community Development were presented with FETAC certificates.

The Business Development Programme they completed over 6 months enables them to turn their business idea into reality.

Ten have already begun to set up in business and one has taken up a full-time job.

Among them is a psychic reader. Others include a nail technician, personal development coach, landscaper, carpenter, cooper, fitness instructor and floor fitter.

The course has been running for over 10 years and is funded by the Department of Social Protection and the Local and Community Development Programme.

### MAYNOOTH CONFERENCE

Nov 13th/14th: Rights,  
Re-Structuring and Results

The annual Community Development conference in NUI Maynooth takes place this year from November 13 & 14th.

It provides "space for reflection, analysis & discussion among practitioners, activists, leaders, agencies and officials."

The event is being organised in association with the Community Workers Co-Operative and will feature speakers from England, Canada and the USA.

To book a place, email: [communitywork@nuim.ie](mailto:communitywork@nuim.ie)



# POSTCARDS FROM THE EDGE

- APPROX. 34 PROJECTS FACE FUNDING CLIFF
- WOMEN, TRAVELLERS & MORE MAY LOSE OUT
- MINISTER PROMISES "FAIREST RESULTS POSSIBLE"

**BY ALLEN MEAGHER**

Amidst sweeping changes to the system of local government in Ireland, community groups are feeling the heat.

Projects that receive "core-funding" from the State for essential community development work with vulnerable communities and marginalised people face a funding cliff on December 31st.

In particular, at least five long-established companies that receive LCDP funding fear for their futures: They are unable to compete for funding from the Government's biggest anti-poverty programme from 2015.

They were not big enough in terms of employee numbers and/or turnover

to qualify under the tendering process of the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP).

It means that, among others, not-for-profits engaged in community development with Travellers (14 projects) and with women in disadvantaged areas nationally (17 projects) are unclear about their future.

Supporters and staff of the National

Collective of Community-Based Women's Networks lobbied politicians and engaged in a postcard-writing campaign during the summer. Pavee Point is scheduled to meet Minister Alan Kelly shortly while 'Changing Ireland' has done so.

Meanwhile, island projects have together succeeded in applying to SICAP, as have 14 companies in Dublin who formed a co-op to do so. However, not all companies can do that.

Connemara FM development worker Colleen Curran said, "We're going for 19 years, yet we don't meet any of the criteria. We can only hope we will have funding next year."

Questioned on the matter by Senator Paschal Mooney in July, Minister Alan Kelly said he would bring the matter to the attention of officials in his Department "in order that they might investigate the position further."

He told 'Changing Ireland', that once the issues are "dissected" he will "ensure that the fairest results possible will happen." (Full interview, pages 4-5).

The issue - and there are others - is likely to surface at Community Workers' Co-operative workshops being held "in relation to local

government reform and its implications for community work and the community sector."

Internationally, three-year funding cycles are considered the minimum optimum for NGOs engaging in effective development.

LCDP-funded companies have this year received successive contracts for six, one and five months.



*A Community Development worker in Mullingar posts letters to the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government. Projects nationwide are affected.*

## 'SAVE LDCs' CAMPAIGN REACHES DAIL

*- Diary of a Dail protest amid claims EU is supportive*

**BY BEN PANTER**

They came from all corners of Ireland on July 9th seeking to reverse the decision to take LEADER and LCDP funding from 50 Local Development Companies and transfer it over to local authorities.

While Local Development Companies could still apply for funding, their status would be vastly diminished.

Organisers estimated 5,000 people arrived outside Leinster house, banners in hand, to show the government prior to their summer holidays what they thought of their plans.

The colourful rally lasted 90 minutes and for that time Kildare Street was a sea of banners saying "What people is Hogan putting first?", "Hands off rural Ireland" and "Rural communities say no to alignment". The sun split the rocks and uilleann pipers added a festival air to proceedings, but in reality 5,000 protesters seemed like an over-estimation. The 'Irish Times' estimated 2,500 people, which seemed a fairer reflection.

Speakers included MEPs Marian Harkin and Liadh Ni Riadh who promised to bring the fight to Brussels.

Cross party support was evident. Speakers said the issue of alignment has united the opposition and rural communities against Government plans to "hand over" community



*The rally marked the culmination of a nearly nationwide campaign to "Save LDCs". Photo: B. Panter.*

development funding to "the anonymous bureaucracy" of the local authorities.

Doirin Graham, CEO of CLDC, said: "Alignment will make our company unviable. Our services will cease or go elsewhere, there are no other organisations with the expertise and skills to deliver these services... but this is far from over, there are a number of opportunities to redirect alignment into the hands of the community."

The rally outside the Dail marked the highpoint to date in the 'Save LDCs' campaign. Most but not all companies have taken part in the demonstrations.

**NOTE** - While many staff (using annual

leave), board members and supporters of ILDN member organisations took part in the rally, the ILDN as an organisation did not take part; it was beyond its remit.

### UPDATE:

The Irish Local Development Network (ILDN) - the umbrella body for LDCs - met in September with Alan Kelly, the new Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, to discuss issues surrounding alignment and the tendering process in advance of the rollout of new funding streams.

## INTRODUCTION: The true power of sports & recreation

**T**he United Nations views sport and recreation as a powerful tool to promote peace, tolerance and understanding. The UN's view is reflected on the ground - just look at how many community groups nationwide embrace sports and community development.

In this edition of 'Changing Ireland', we have gone beyond the usual suspects - soccer, rugby and Gaelic Games - to highlight the more alternative sports and recreational activities that community workers help to organise. Most of the activities featured here received LCDP support, while others received support through Government-funded initiatives such as the sports partnerships.

'Changing Ireland' has previously covered midnight basketball, line-dancing, horse projects and curling. Tell us what you've organised!

## UN BODY IN DUBLIN WARNS SOCIETY "AT TIPPING POINT" IF SPORTS IGNORED - Croke Park UNESCO symposium

**I**f an international declaration made in Dublin in August is ignored, then we will have reached "a tipping point that jeopardises stable, civil societies worldwide."

Sport's place in youth and community development is regarded with the utmost importance at international level and to emphasise that, on August 28, a major UN symposium on sport and international youth development took place in Croke Park.

The 'UNESCO Symposium on Youth Civic Engagement and Leadership through Sport and Recreation' was held alongside an American football clash between two US university teams.

It made headlines for displacing a Gaelic football semi-final replay and because a stunt parachutist due to land on the pitch missed Croke Park completely.

However, off-pitch, over 150 delegates



Delegates at the UN organisation's symposium in Croke Park came from many countries.



It's hard to miss Croke Park, but this guy did!

worked to produce "The Croke Park Declaration" which aims to spur youth development worldwide. It emphasised many of the principles inherent in community development work in calling for action "to ensure significant youth engagement and ownership of local life."

The declaration specifically called "for youth worldwide (regardless of a nation's wealth or poverty) to receive the attention and support necessary to self-empower and take on ownership of their own lives and development in their societies. We stress that youth engagement through sport, recreation and the arts is an invaluable avenue for accomplishing this goal."

Warnings were sounded by speakers who said "the active engagement of youth is essential to international security, stability, regional capacity building, and many development outcomes."

The full declaration is online at: <http://bit.ly/1ufDx1J>

## Anglers in

**B**luebell Community Angling Club (BCAC) has turned a once-dirty section of the Grand Canal into a fish stretch of water of international standards.

Tommy Coombes, project manager with Canal Corporation Partnership, which provides support to the club, said: "all born out of very little. Now, we're ready to host international competitions."

The stretch of water between locks three and four of the Grand Canal now has 20 fishing points, including two for disabled participants and the area is constantly restocked.

Reclaiming this stretch of waterway has been a real achievement. It began as the brainchild of a work place student, Mick Mooney, four years ago.

The area has been blighted by long-term unemployment and Tommy asked Mick, who had a long-term interest in angling, to see what could be done.

The club began with six members and today has ten times that figure and is proving a real positive force in members' lives.

As Mick Weldon (37) explained: "I joined three years ago, it changed my life as I had the chance to meet lads in similar circumstances to myself. Now I'm on the committee."

"I was unemployed and I got involved through the CDP and I got to try different things."



## INCLUSIVITY OF CIRCLE DANCING - Waterford Women's Centre

**G**reeks, Arabs, Slavs, Celts, even the Church of England, have circle dancing traditions.

With a heritage that transcends borders, it is a pastime that has inclusion stamped all over it.

The Waterford Womens Centre (WWC) certainly think so. Kate Crotty, outreach development worker and facilitator of circle dancing classes and workshops is passionate about its benefits.

"There's a huge health and wellbeing aspect to it," she said.

"It doesn't matter about their ability, you don't have to know your left and your right, you don't have to be able to dance, you don't have to be qualified. Circle dancing crosses all boundaries of participation that can lock people in at times, it touches something deep in people."

In keeping with this inclusive nature, circle dancing is simple, there are no rules and no complex moves to learn, the dancing is simply an expression of inner thoughts and feelings



# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

## Bluebell land a dream project

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I've been to a men's health day, done a computer course, done a forklift and security course.

"There's still a lot of unemployment but it keeps my CV ticking over," he said.

According to Mick Mooney, this is exactly what the club is about: "The first part of our meetings are all about angling and in the second half we talk about how we can improve the lives of our members."

"We're looking to set up an enterprise venture, a 24/7 men's shed that would also serve as a one-stop-shop for anyone needing training or education."

He said committee members have learned how

to deal with officials, provide financial statements, safety statements and much more.

"It's powerful," he admitted. "Currently, there's no other angling club in the country doing what we are doing and in terms of best practice we're all the time getting phone calls from people asking for advice on what we do."

Tommy said, "This is a very vibrant initiative engaging with the men in Bluebell – they have a real sense of ownership around the project."

This ownership is evident through the club's fundraising activities which includes a well-supported local lotto.

Fundraising activities are so successful that the club is now self-supporting, with the CCP only offering support for bigger events such as exhibitions.

It proves that even in the largest urban areas, oases of tranquility can be developed that have the capability to change lives.

A six-minute clip on Youtube tells more about the club's activities and the Community Development principles it observes:

[fb.me/1ScQ8kLnQ](https://www.facebook.com/1ScQ8kLnQ)

Facebook page: [http://on.fb.me/1BKjv1x](https://on.fb.me/1BKjv1x)

Mick Weldon can be contacted on: 01-4601366.

Canal Communities Partnership (CCP) serves the communities of Bluebell, Islandbridge, Inchicore, Rialto and Kilmainham.

**T: 01-4732196. E: [info@canalpartnership.com](mailto:info@canalpartnership.com)**

**W: [www.canalpartnership.com/](http://www.canalpartnership.com/)**

*Pictured left - Gerry Desmond (carp). Centre - Stephen O'Brien (carp). Right - Jack O'Neil (pike).*



## CIRCLE DANCING MAKES IT PERFECT CHOICE

entre



through the movement of the body.

Socially, physically, mentally and spiritually, circle dancing is an ancient practise with a host of benefits for modern times.

Denise Hayes found it was perfect for her: "First of all it gave me confidence. I have mild cerebral palsy and I wouldn't be able to do a lot of dance because my balance isn't very good, but this dance is different, the steps are easy, there's nothing difficult."

She said her mental health "improved massively" from getting involved.

**WWC receives funding through the Local and Community Development Programme.**

**For more information.**

**T: 051-351918.**

**W: [www.waterfordwomenscentre.com](http://www.waterfordwomenscentre.com)**

*PHOTO: Circle dancing in Waterford during a 'Health & Wellbeing' session. The sessions were funded by the Solidarity Trust and the Education Training Board.*

# BEN PANTER REPORTS - SPORTS & COM

## GIVE KIDS GLOVES AND WATCH THEM GROW

- Katie Taylor visits as Rathnew eyes Tokyo

County Wicklow is earning a reputation as a boxing hotspot. Katie Taylor has brought Olympic glory to Bray and the town of Rathnew with the help of the LCDP is keen to follow in her slipstream.

Head Coach of Rathnew Boxing Club, Eamon White, is confident: "Olympic

success for us? With dedication and commitment hopefully we can."

A gold medal would be a major coup for the Wicklow Partnership-backed initiative but Eamon is keen to point out that sporting success is not the club's main priority. He takes a community development approach.

"The biggest thing is the social aspect. I deal with it as a youth club. You are not going to breed a champion every year," he said.

One tangible benefit of participation is education achievements, Eamon explained: "Kids are staying in school because of their boxing peers. Kids from all walks of life are meeting people they wouldn't normally meet and as a result some of them have progressed onto third level education."

Feedback from parents has been positive; they see major changes, an improvement in confidence and interpersonal skills among the young boxers.

Eamon said, "It adds another string to their bow, for a lot of kids boxing gives them confidence in themselves."

Although Olympic success is not at the



Katie Taylor visits Rathnew Boxing Club and meets Linda Murphy (Croi Rath Naoi CDP) and club coach Eamon White.



Young Rathnew boxers display their certs.



Ready to go in Rathnew: Abbie Doyle, Abbie O' Loughlin and Rachel Hunter.

top of the clubs to-do list, they are making progress.

Eleven-year-old Rachel Hunter reached the Girls Irish Finals and clubmate Abbey Doyle reached the semi-finals this year.

Rachel's father Patrick said, "Boxing means everything to her, she doesn't play any other sport."

Liz Dunne, development officer at the Wicklow Partnership, played a major role in setting up the club, finding premises and helping with behind-the-scenes work.

She says, "The club is a sustainable model and my job is successful when I can walk away."

By the time the Tokyo Olympics roll around in 2020 the whole nation may be cheering on the fruits of this local community development project.

## NO LIMITS, NO EXCUSES, NO EXCLUSION AT SEA

- Sligo Kayak Club

Sligo has become something of a Mecca for watersport enthusiasts in recent years. Huge swells around Mullaghmore have attracted top professionals from as far afield as California and Australia.

The Sligo Sports and Recreation Partnership (SSRP) has capitalised on the county's geographical good fortune and turned watersports into a tool for social

inclusion.

Eddie Loftus, training officer at Sligo Kayak Club describes their objectives: "To promote a healthy lifestyle in the fabulous scenery around Sligo and to bring together people of different ages and cultural backgrounds."

Last year the club was involved in an initiative with Lissadell house and the SSRP called 'No Limits', a programme designed to introduce people of all backgrounds to physical recreation.

Participants included people who were visually impaired, wheelchair users and asylum-seekers.

A ripped body and golden surfers tan are not the pre-requisites for inclusion; all that is required is a basic swimming ability and according to Eddie a good sense of humour.

As he put it: "Kayaking is not the most elegant of sports - imagine a sixteen stone fella like me being lifted into a kayak."

Sligo Leader Partnership funding allowed the club to invest in two new two-person kayaks which, according to Eddie, gives people who are less confident an opportunity to try watersports under guidance. So there is no longer an excuse for the certified land lubbers amongst us to say no.

Kayaking is a versatile sport and trips can be organised to match interests and ability, whether it is riding wave-breaks in Sligo's best loved surfspots or cruising at leisure around the beautiful Lough Gill.

T: 086-1922424.

E: [edwardloftus@eircom.net](mailto:edwardloftus@eircom.net)

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





# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

## "The real sporting event of summer took place in Donegal"

- 80 youngsters and their families will swear by it



Inishowen Development Partnership boldly claims that the real sporting event of the summer was not the World Cup in Brazil but the 'One Donegal' Peace III Extension Project in which it is the lead partner.

How many really follow soccer? How many Irish people went to Rio?

"If football is not your thing or the overexposure to a month of soccer has you kicking balls in your sleep then we may be able to help," the organisers said.

The event took place before Donegal reached the Gaelic Football All-Ireland Final.

The 'One Donegal Summer Camp' brought together 80 young people and their families for three days and took place in three sporting and event centres across the county.

From August 12-14th, participants tried "alternative sports" and took part in workshops geared towards promoting greater community integration through participation. Members of various ethnic communities in Donegal were involved as were families from some of the islands off the Donegal coast.

The events also helped to identify leaders from the groups to invite to residential intercultural summer camps later this year.

It was followed, in September, by cricket on the green:

Donegal Sports Partnership, Donegal County Council, Inishowen Development Partnership and Cricket Ireland delivered a "Cricket Factory", a fun introduction to cricket for the public in Bernard Mc Glinchey Park in Letterkenny.

Inishowen Development Partnership aims through all these events to develop its vision for the area: "Donegal, a County where racism and sectarianism no longer exists and where all feel equally valued and confident that they

belong."

'One Donegal' is supported by the Special EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation under Priority 1.1 which seeks to build positive relations at local level.

**For more information, email Dessie Larkin of Inishowen Development Partnership (dessielarkin@inishowen.ie) or call camp co-ordinator Karen Guthrie on 087-7376537.**

**'One Donegal's Facebook page: <http://on.fb.me/XeQLym>**



*The line-up of diverse activities meant the participants never knew what was coming next.*

*All photos on this page courtesy of Danny Nee who works for the Donegal Sports Partnership. More amazing shots by Danny online, via Facebook.*

# SPORT & COMM. DEV'T.

## HOW TO NORDIC WALK YOUR WAY BACK TO WORK

**N**ordic Walking - its name evokes images of bearded Vikings on epic journeys of conquest across the Arctic ice.

Its origins are more mundane which may be a relief to newcomers to the sport: Nordic Walking with specially designed poles - stylish walking sticks - has reinvented walking as a fitness pursuit.

Originally developed as off-season training for Finnish skiers, its health benefits surpass regular walking and are now being utilized as weapons in the Arthritis sufferer's well-being survival kit.

Advantages over its pole-less counterpart are a more complete workout, using more muscles.

The use of the poles transforms 'normal' walking (where most of the work is done by the legs) into a complete body workout.

According to Damian Kelly, chairperson of Arthritis Ireland's Sligo branch: "Nordic Walking is a lot easier and helps people deal with pain."

Research has shown that physical activity can reduce pain, increase mobility and even lessen the severity of flare-ups.

Cost benefits of participation in physical activities like Nordic Walking include a saving on medication, less time off work and even a return to the workforce.

Arthritis Ireland has been a long-time advocate of self-managing the condition and physical activity is central to that, said Damian.

Shane Hayes from the Sligo Sports and Recreational Partnership helped set up the Nordic Walking initiative last September. The group now has around 15 members who go walking on Wednesday nights and the group is now self-sufficient in its own right.

RTE radio star John Murray has lived with psoriatic arthritis since he was 18 and recommends people contact Arthritis Ireland for information, advice and exercise programmes.

**People interested in setting up a group in their area are welcome to contact Shane Hayes from Sligo Sports Inclusion Programmes.**

**T: 071-9161511. E: shane@sligosportandrecreation.ie W: www.sligosportandrecreation.ie Also recommended: www.arthritisireland.ie and www.nordicwalking.ie**

## About Sports Partnerships

**T**here are Sports Partnerships in every county striving to increase participation in sports and recreation at local level. They work for instance in recruiting and training volunteers and managing events.

The network of Sports Partnerships operate under the umbrella of the Irish Sports Council.

The partnerships especially seek to encourage participation by older people, girls and women, people with disabilities, unemployed people and people living in disadvantaged communities.

**For more information, visit: [www.irishsportscouncil.ie/Participation](http://www.irishsportscouncil.ie/Participation)**

## What's in it for you & me?

**T**he UN - through a Croke Park symposium (see page 12) - emphasised that by engaging in sport, recreation and the arts, young people in particular:

- o Gain an understanding of leadership, teamwork, self-discipline, empathy and problem solving,
- o Learn personal and social responsibility, protectiveness, resilience, and dedication.
- o Put these skills into action on and off the field/court/venue as productive citizens.
- o Gain a sense of inclusion, belonging, community attachment, pride and self-confidence.
- o Acquire valuable social supports through involvement that lead to positive citizenship.
- o Show a lower tendency to engage in dangerous and unhealthy behaviours.

Through all of the above, youths develop individual resilience and contribute to enhanced community resilience and well-being in society.

# NEWS BRIEFS

## TAKING THE INITIATIVE

**Businesses & communities work together: Cork & Dublin**

'Business in the Community' (BITC) is starting a two-year consultation to look at disadvantage and social exclusion in designated areas around the country. The first six months will focus on Dublin 1 and, from January 2015, Cork.

Working with community reps and businesses, BITC wants people to give their views and suggest ideas, outline their community's aspirations and say how they feel businesses could contribute.

The work will lead to the publication of a solutions-focused joint action plan.

The initiative is supported by the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government.

Community, voluntary and charitable organisations that wish to have their say should contact community outreach worker Ann Howgego.

**T: 01-8743846. E: [ahowgego@bitc.ie](mailto:ahowgego@bitc.ie) W: [www.bitc.ie](http://www.bitc.ie)**

## VOLUNTEERS ON CALL

**New volunteer corps in Dublin is recruiting**

**A** new volunteer corps is being formed by South Dublin County Volunteer Centre and South Dublin County Council.

The corps is a volunteer led movement of local citizens who are available to volunteer at various once-off events and/or emergencies in the county.

The South Dublin County Volunteer Corps was recently involved in community festivals and sporting events. Most of the events that the corps participate in are short and at weekends - for a morning or an afternoon.

Volunteers pick and choose which events to participate in - at a minimum helping out at one event a year.

They receive an email two weeks before an event and they can choose whether to opt in or out.

Volunteering with the corps is an opportunity, said the organisers, to:

- learn new skills
- meet new people
- make a genuine difference in your local community.

**For more information contact Colette Gallagher at South Dublin County Volunteer Centre. T: 01-462-8558. W: [www.volunteersouthdublin.ie](http://www.volunteersouthdublin.ie)**



## "JUST DO IT!" SAY CO-OP LEADERS AT CLOUGHJORDAN

*Peter Couchman, CEO of the Plunkett Foundation, returned to Ireland to call on community leaders to stand up and lead change. The laws governing co-ops here also need to change, he said.*

*Photo by Tony Grehan Photography.*



The main message for community leaders at a four-day international event in September about social businesses and collaborative thinking was "Just Do It!"

Attendees at the 'Open Everything' event in Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary, discussed many options, especially how traditional co-operatives in Ireland and the new global 'open source movement' could collaborate.

### 'OPEN SOURCE' ALTERNATIVES

The 'open source movement' has taken off in the last few years in the software and tech sectors. Apart from software, there is also the largest encyclopedia in the world, Wikipedia, entirely based on voluntary contributions versus the traditional one based on intellectual property.

Other examples given were the open hardware community, open source ecology, and open technology like collaborative beehives.

### COMMUNITY-OWNED BUSINESSES

Although the laws governing co-operatives badly need to be updated – for example, community benefit co-operatives are not currently allowed for – there are other forms under which community-owned business can be established. There are for instance some supports and funding available to encourage community groups to establish "social enterprises".

### LOCAL AUTHORITY CONTRACTS

Attitudes need to change. The delegates asked how many local authorities in Ireland give contracts to community based co-ops to provide services?

For example, in Bologna, Italy, over 80% of social care work is provided by social co-operatives.

### CO-OPS V CORPORATIONS

Co-op structures, with democratic ownership and community benefit at their heart are still seen as most suitable for community initiatives.

Workshop participants made the point that commercial companies and corporations often have a vested interest in maintaining scarcity whereas the public would better benefit from the open model.

### SOCIETAL CHANGE

Recently, a new vision for a co-operative economy has emerged based on the principles of collaboration, solidarity, the protection of the commons, environmental stewardship, economic democracy, social justice, and the common good.

The event in Cloughjordan was supported by North Tipperary Leader Partnership, the Plunkett Foundation, Tipperary Local Enterprise Office and Tipperary County Council.

For more information, visit: [openeverything.ie](http://openeverything.ie)

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# Once hard, now easy to reach

## 200th 'MEN'S SHED' OPENS IN IRELAND

- Proving men can have always been eager to get involved



*The men secured a lease on this main street property in Borrisokane and spruced up the premises which is now fully operational.*

### BY BEN PANTER

Perplexed, community workers for many years struggled to reach and involve men in community activities.

It took an Australian, John Evoy, to introduce the 'Men's Sheds' concept to Ireland and since then it marked a major breakthrough.

Men, it is said, don't talk face-to-face, but shoulder-to-shoulder. Was it really that difficult to reach men after all, you may now wonder.

On June 18th, the Men's Shed Association reached a milestone when the County Tipperary town of Borrisokane had the honour of opening the country's 200th Men's Shed.

The official opening was performed by Borrisokane's Lord Mayor Darragh McKenna as locals and members of the Roscrea Men's Shed turned out to offer support.

The facility is open to all men aged over 18 regardless of background and ability.

Chairman of the shed PJ Power was humble about his role in the project: "I am chairman in name only. This place belongs to the men. Our committee has been formed for six months and we now have ten men involved with the shed."

He said the idea came during a (Borrisokane) Community Forum meeting: "I'd heard about men's sheds before and always

thought it was a good idea."

The men are currently involved in woodwork - making bird-boxes, flower-boxes, seating for children and a wooden wheelbarrow. All of the materials used by the would-be carpenters are recycled.

One of the Shed's objectives is to promote well-being amongst the men.

PJ said, "We sit and talk. It gets lads out of themselves and improves confidence and at the end of the day they have something to talk to their partners about. There are a lot of men suffering from depression - many are out of work with nothing to do."

There are plans to run welding and wood-lathe workshops in the future but there is one small problem to overcome: "We've no ESB but please God we'll have that for the winter," said PJ.

As well as electricity, Borrisokane's Men's Shed is on the lookout for timber, pallets, fire extinguishers and used furniture.

Many individuals and agencies have provided funding, tools and other forms of support, including North Tipperary Leader Partnership, to the project.

**For more info, contact PJ Power. T: 087-2317427. Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/borrismensshed>**

**W: <http://menssheds.ie>**

## First ever 'Women's Sheds' open

Not to be outdone by their male counterparts the women of Borrisokane have decided to set up their own shed.

The first meeting and information evening took place on August 5th.

The concept was borrowed from the Ennis Women's Shed in Co. Clare which has the remarkable honour of being the first of its kind in the northern hemisphere.

Miriam Lewis, one of the organisers of the project, said: "We are just starting out. The women of the town wanted their own shed."

Interest is strong with at least 20 parties offering support for the idea.

The group have had a provisional offer of a premises and they hope to have formalised it shortly.

Miriam says the shed will take an earthy approach to crafts: "We hope to run knitting, woodwork and carpentry classes and local artists will run willow, rush-work and stained glass workshops.

An inclusive ethos is important to the group with the only stipulation being that participants are over-18.

Nationally, the Men's Shed Association is not involved in setting up women's sheds.

**For more information, contact Miriam on 086-8941626. E: [borrisokanewomensshed@gmail.com](mailto:borrisokanewomensshed@gmail.com) Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/borrisokanewomensshed>.**



*Catriona Lennon, Luli McKenna Niamh O'Brien (P.R.O. Ennis Women's Shed), Louise Duddy, Pamela Burke, Miriam Lewis, Elaine Bailey, Diana Elrington and Susan Polden.*



# EXCLUSIVE COURT REPORT!

## HORACE SUES MORRISSEY - MCDERMOTT AWARDED €3.5 MILLION IN DAMAGES

After five years, and two fractious appeal hearings the celebrity journalist Horace McDermott of County Limerick has been successful in his damages case against ex-Smiths singer, Steven Patrick Morrissey, aka Mozzer.

### YOUR ARSENAL

McDermott alleged that Morrissey took his image and used it as the cover of his hit album 'Your Arsenal'.

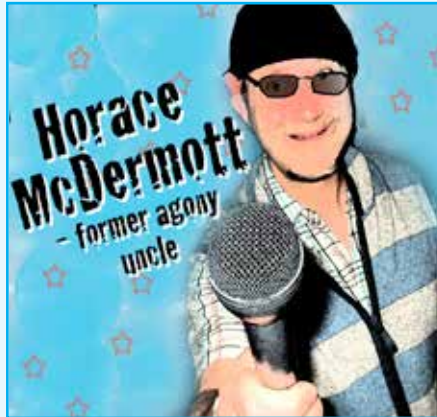
McDermott spoke to the press while celebrating in the Judge's Oxtar cafe bar near the High Court. He said he felt vindicated "because a person's image is unique" and he felt Morrissey had demeaned him by making Horace's natural look so "sexy and hot" that Horace felt he had to live up to this new image on a daily basis for years.

### WAX MY NECK

"It isn't easy," added McDermott. "I've had to wax my neck once a fortnight and you can't claim that on expenses."

McDermott said he will invest his winnings wisely. A friend said Horace might initially treat himself to a small town in County Roscommon.

Due to Horace's victory in the courts and particularly his receipt of a cheque for €3,500,000 he was



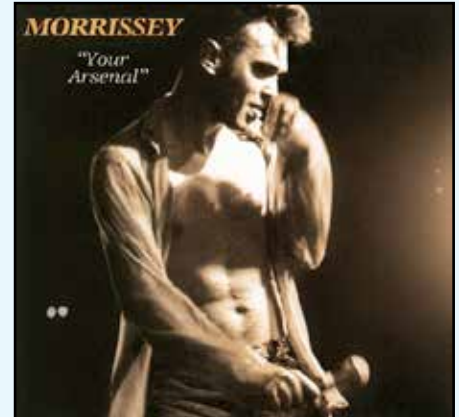
*The judge was astonished that Morrissey blatantly replicated Horace's unique look.*

unavailable to write for 'Changing Ireland' as the magazine went to press.

### EDITOR'S NOTE

We recommended to Horace that he has a word with County Tyrone Euromillions winner Margaret Loughrey who is donating most of her €33 million haul to friends, family and the community.

In reply, Horace pointed us towards that great hit tune from the 'Your Arsenal' album: "We hate it when our friends become successful."

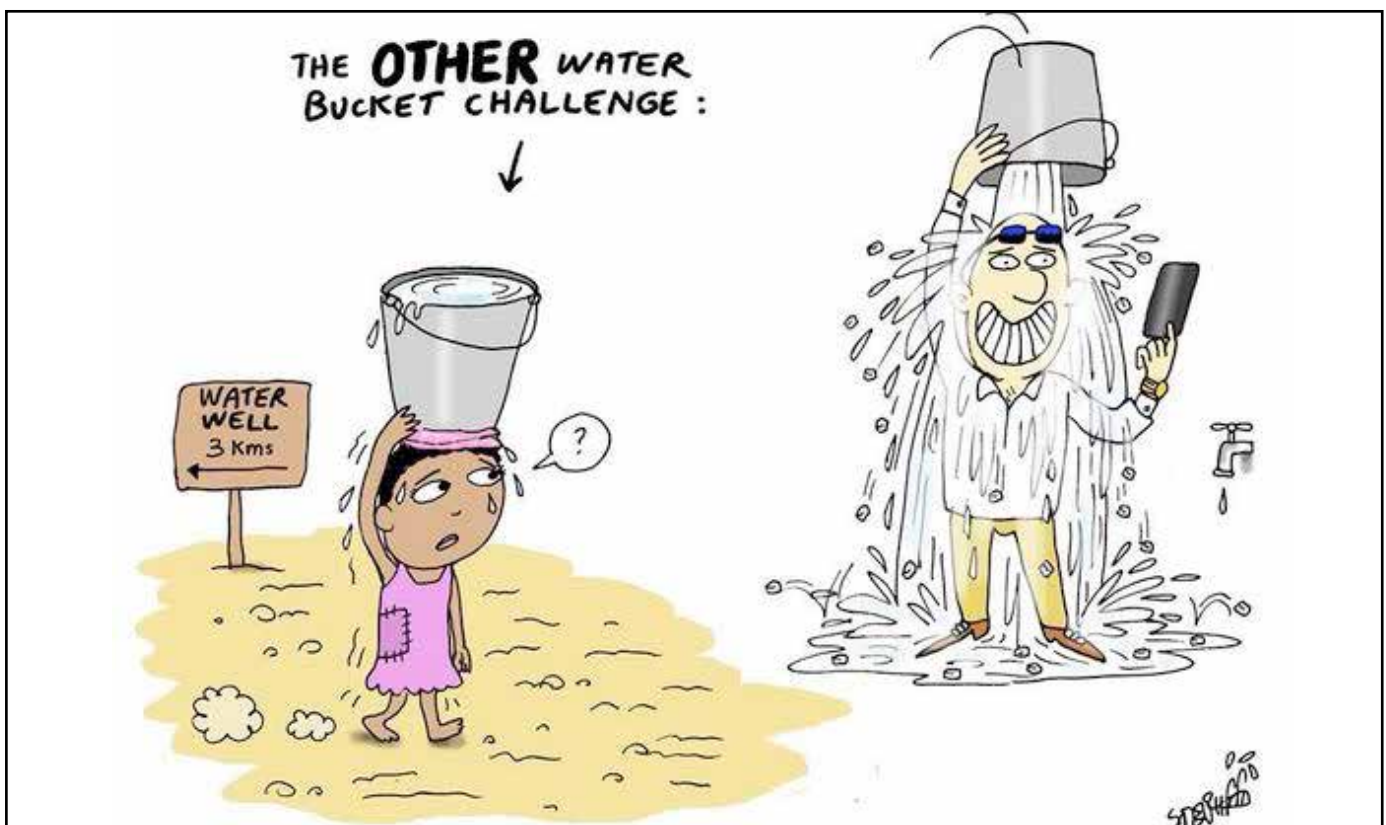


Will Horace return? Does he still care about social justice issues? Find out in the next issue.

**ABOUT HORACE:** A former civil servant, community worker and agony uncle, Horace knows it all.

He has addressed everything from world poverty to extraordinary rendition and estate enhancement, and has a huge readership among people seeking change in their pockets.

A few of his better columns are available exclusively on the 'Changing Ireland' website.



# CONGRATS TO ONE OF OUR OWN!

## FORMER INTERN ROB NOW AN AWARD-WINNING 'EXAMINER' REPORTER

- Rob wins Sunday Times Award
- Remains involved with 'Changing Ireland'

Readers who enjoyed the journalism in these pages by Robert McNamara will be disappointed to hear he is less likely to contribute as avidly as before.

However, it's all for good reason. Having graduated top of his class from UL's journalism school, Robert clinched a major award from the 'Sunday Times' and was recently snapped up by the 'Irish Examiner' to work their digital desk.

Robert won the UL 'Sunday Times Young Journalist of the Year Award' for an article that revealed that 59 asylum-seekers have died in State care over the past decade without the Department of Justice knowing the cause of their deaths.

"They don't have access to the death certificates even though the Coroner's Court is part of the Department of Justice," said Robert, accepting his award. He thanked among others this publication for assistance provided in the early stages of the story.

Robert made good his year here and his work was picked up by the local press and by RTE television.

Robert continues to be involved with 'Changing Ireland' behind the scenes. He has developed our online social media presence and is a member of the editorial team which meets prior to each publication.

We wish Robert the very best and know his success bodes well for human rights related journalism coverage in Ireland.

His dedication to anything he commits to is immense. He arrived into work here limping on his first day, having completed a marathon in Cork the day before. We of course showed him tremendous pity!

Congratulations Robert from all at 'Changing Ireland' - well deserved!



(Above) 'Sunday Times' (Ireland) editor Frank Fitzgibbon presents Robert with his award.



(Left) Robert with his mother Mary after completing the Cork City Marathon earlier this year.



(Right) At the workplace of his new employer, the 'Irish Examiner'. "None of my success would have been achievable without the support of my wife Caitriona," said Robert.

## Ben Panter, Community Journalist

Ben Panter lives in Shannon, Co. Clare, and is a father of two boys.

He spent eight years working in the construction industry and six more in the North Clare tourist sector. He is now studying Journalism and New Media at UL.

Ben has taken to his new career with enthusiasm and, following a three-month placement with 'Changing Ireland', his journalism features strongly in this edition. He has a natural eye for a story.

Inspired by the community spirit he encountered researching stories, Ben joined a community garden project he visited. (See his report on pages 21-23).

His hobbies include surfing and charity fun runs.

E: [journalist@changingireland.ie](mailto:journalist@changingireland.ie)

M: 085-7035617.





# COMMUNITY GARDENING



## GREEN-FINGERED BALLYFERMOT YOUTHS HAVE EYE ON IRELAND'S EXPORT RECOVERY

BY BEN PANTER

A Dublin city initiative is helping green-fingered men and women learn how to break the dependence on foreign food imports and help youngsters get recognised qualifications to boot.

The Cherry Orchard Community Market Garden with support from the Ballyfermot Partnership has surpassed all expectations.

David Jackson, head of the gardens, which are beside Cherry Orchard Equine Centre, explained:

"In total, the enterprise has 40 allotments and 19 are currently leased out to members of the community. TUS provides voluntary work for eight males and we have 16 young people studying FETAC Level 4 in Horticulture. It's proven a very practical way to get youths involved in vocational education."

"The young lads are so proud of the site they are actually owning it in the sense that they take responsibility for security, pest control and maintenance," he said.

Peadar Lynch, TUS scheme leader, told Changing Ireland: "It was designed as a work activation programme and initially lads didn't want to do the course, but the guys on board are now more than happy."

As part of the TUS scheme, the participants work through eight modules of the Horticulture Certificate.

"The workers from TUS have worked really hard, physically demanding work and not always in the best of weather," testified Catherine Lane, community worker with Ballyfermot Partnership. Their dedication has extended the garden's growing season and allotments capacity.

Take for instance Sean French who started at Pearse College in Crumlin in September studying FETAC level 5 in Horticulture and Amenity: "I definitely want a career in this now," he said.

At least eight of the others studying level four are planning to progress onto FETAC Level 5.

Another success story is Nicko Kirwan who is now head of six of the allotments. He explained how he got involved: "I went up one day to see my wife and ended up signing up for a FETAC in Horticulture. I was unemployed and this has given me a purpose in life."

*"It was designed as a work activation programme and initially lads didn't want to do the course..."*



Members promote Cherry Orchard Community Market Garden.

According to Nicko there is no shortage of interested gardeners looking for advice and he believes this kind of initiative can put Ireland back on the export map.

"Ireland was once the biggest producer of potatoes – there is no reason why we can't get that back."

He said that without the garden he would have little purpose in life – "I couldn't see myself leaving. I'd be lost."

The former construction labourer has now found a new career vocation and is willing to put down the hard graft to make it a success.

"You won't get any pesticides on our products. We only use organic materials and are currently trying to get organic certification."

This can be an arduous process. It costs €275 for three hours testing and the organic certification can be affected by neighbouring plots and water supplies as many farmers around the country have found to their detriment.

Boxes of vegetables priced at €10 each are delivered locally with proceeds going back into buying seeds and tools.

For the unemployed members of the community, gardening the vegetables represents a significant cost saving on their weekly shopping bill.

A series of courses is on offer to local residents interested in growing their own.

Cherry Orchard Community Gardens are proving to be a brilliant example of how local community development can deliver an educated and skilled workforce with local and potentially national benefits.

Visitors are welcome. T: 087-2724537. E: [communitygardens@ballyfermotpartnership.ie](mailto:communitygardens@ballyfermotpartnership.ie)

B: <http://ballyfermotchapelizodpartnership.blogspot.com>  
The gardens also have a Facebook page.



The gardens are open to all to come and learn.



## PRO-SURFER GIVES UP JET-SET GARDENING

- Moy Hill founder is 26, originally from Mayo
- Star surfer used to ride Hawaii monsters
- Enthusiasm infects local & overseas gardeners
- Lured by Lahinch's rich soil

**BY BEN PANTER**

One of Ireland's top professional surfers has given up his jet-set lifestyle to create a community garden in a picturesque corner of North Clare.

The Community Garden in Moy Hill, Lahinch, celebrated its first harvest festival in late August with a feast of home-grown vegetables and music from local musicians including Luka Bloom.

**Fergal Smith** had been paid by sponsors to travel the world and show off his board skills on some of the oceans "sickest" waves.

He made global headlines in 2008 when he was pictured sharing a wave with a great white shark while surfing in Australia.

The surf star turned his back on chasing waves after describing his seemingly dream existence as "the ultimate consumer lifestyle - you travel around the world but you give nothing back."

"I loved every minute of it, travelling the world. But I wasn't eating my own food and I could really see the difference."

Fergal was always fussy about his diet: "It became clear that I really needed to grow my own food."

He grew up on his father's organic farm



*Probably the most famous shot of Fergal surfing. He was unaware of the shark.*

in Mayo and felt the need to return to his roots and teach others the skills needed to produce homegrown grub.

"I could do it on my own but I really want to help others. We have a bit of space now where we can invite people in and all learn and use our expertise, not just in gardening.

"For example, if someone's into art they can do a decorative signpost or if someone's into building they can help with a glasshouse."

The community garden's plans focus

heavily on children and education and the group has already run 'Surf and Turf Camps' and cooking classes for people of all ages and abilities.

The garden may also benefit local job creation having registered with the TUS scheme.

**Fran O'Donohue from the Clare Local Development Company** said, "The Moy Hill Garden is a great example of how bottom-up development can benefit a community."

## Lexi came gardening for month & found home

There must be something in the soil around Lahinch, because Fergal isn't the only professional to turn their back on a successful career for Moy Hill Community Garden.

Lexi Clarkson (pictured) from St. Petersburg, Florida, has swapped nursing for community gardening and is in the process of moving to County Clare permanently.

Lexi has an Irish heritage and took a sabbatical from her career as a pediatric physiotherapist.

"On a whim I reached out and asked Fergal do they take wwoofers\*. He said they were more than willing and I could come in exchange for food and accommodation."

She booked a flight, intending to stay a month.

"I was really inspired by the people and



their organic, sustainable practices and was overwhelmed by the kindness and generosity of the people here in County Clare.

"Now, I've resigned from my job, I'm selling my car and giving away my possessions.

"I want to be part of the real solution, preventing cancer, autism and obesity in children (through healthy eating) rather than fixing those problems through rehabilitation. There is ample scientific literature to back up the connection between our health and what we eat.

"I've never felt healthier in my life eating good green food. This garden has become my home," she said.

**\* DEFINITION: A wwoofer is a 'Willing Worker On Organic Farms'.**



# LIFESTYLE FOR COMMUNITY



*Fergal Smith displays some of the produce grown in Moy Hill Community Garden. There's something in the soil as well as in the air down in West Clare that beats the ordinary.*

## Why are community gardens suddenly so popular?

### - Three experts offer different views

- **Michael Kelly** founded **Grow It Yourself** in Ireland in 2009. The organisation now has 50,000 members in Ireland and overseas. He said: "Food growing has such amazing potential because just one person can be a catalyst for all manner of positive change in a community."
- **Fran O'Donohue** from **Clare Local Development Company** highlighted the fact that, "These gardens are built by the community for the community. They are open and accessible to everyone."
- "The attraction is the ability to have complete control of your own food source. You know what you put into it, and that it's safe for your family to eat," said **Geraldine Tobin** from **Irish Seed Savers**. "People really care about this and are increasingly aware of just how satisfying it is to grow your own, harvest your own and eat your own."



*Moy Hill Community Garden at its most magical...*



# ALPHA MALE VOLUNTEER

- Asylum-seekers are often a people without a voice. They often put up and shut up. Not the case with Alpha Gassama.

## RAY LUCEY REPORTS



*"He's an inspiration to all. He wants to contribute so positively, despite the racism he encountered. He's an inspiration and is very committed to a better Ireland."* - Paula Kenny, Clondalkin Fairtrade Campaign.

A new campaign by asylum-seekers and their supporters has received widespread publicity as protests mount over the inhumane system employed by the State which attempts to rule by fear and contracts private operators to provide bed and board. Meanwhile, years turn to decades for those seeking asylum.

Apart from the horrors of being deported to a country where you may be tortured, campaigners have asked if a man, woman or child can emerge unscathed from our direct provision system.

Alpha Gassama's tale demonstrates that despite all, some can.

A veteran volunteer, one is struck by his determination, resilience and positive 'can do' attitude.

A teacher, he sought refuge in Ireland in 2004, arriving from Guinea in West Africa. He studied sociology in a university there and because of his involvement with the opposition, when the military seized control from the civilian government he had to flee.

His lengthy experience of the stifling direct provision system did not stem his determination. He protested and was moved on six occasions between centres in Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Mosney.

As an asylum seeker, Alpha's life was very restricted, so to keep himself sane he participated in several community projects and completed many courses including 'Irish Politics and Citizenship', 'Participation in Civic Society' and 'Volunteer Management Training'.

In 2012, he resisted threatened deportation with the aid of the 'Let Alpha Stay' campaign backed by local TDs and all 26 councillors in South Dublin.

He launched the Clondalclean initiative that cleans up litter and removes graffiti in the area and was a founder and is currently vice-chair of the Clondalkin Tidy Towns group.

Clondalclean played a role in the early days of the highly successful and ongoing Clondalkin Tidy Towns campaign and Alpha's contribution won him recognition as a runner up at the Volunteer Ireland Awards in 2012.

Alpha went on to establish Immigrant Volunteering Skills and Training Agency, called iVosta, a not-for-profit with environmental, educational and cultural aims. The company is currently seeking charitable status.

iVosta's main objective is to bring together immigrants and Irish people to build sustainable communities and it depends on volunteers.

iVosta encourages asylum-seekers to donate some of their free time, skills and energy to work with local people to meet needs that are not already being fully serviced by statutory agencies or the private sector.

"Volunteering can help you integrate", said Alpha, "Just contact a volunteer centre."

Tricia Nolan, manager of South Dublin Volunteer Centre, commends Alpha for his "great commitment" to the community and shares his view that volunteering is a great way for people new to Ireland to integrate.

Through the evolutionary integration of Clondalclean into the Clondalkin Tidy Towns, Alpha saw the initial negative reactions to asylum-seekers working voluntary in the community ease. Indeed Alpha emphasises that all his achievements in Ireland so far have been within his host community.



However Alpha feels that his participation in the community (under the direct provision system) resulted in him being moved around the country. This made him even more determined in his resolve to continue with his volunteering activities and interests.

Alpha has served as a board member of the Irish Refugee Council and provided one of their main links with asylum-seekers.

"It's not the people, it's the system," he said.

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

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

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

W: [www.dorasluimni.org](http://www.dorasluimni.org)

