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Autumn 2015

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Issue 51 • EMPOWERMENT • COLLECTIVE ACTION • SOCIAL CHANGE • COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT • www.changingireland.ie

Tá siad ag teacht...

They are coming

Agus tá fáilte romhaibh

And you are welcome



~~Craving...~~ Creating a more compassionate nation



ALSO INSIDE:

- Public Participation Networks
- Kidpreneurship in West Cork
- Focus on An Cosán, Tallaght

ISSN 1649-5985

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This publication is produced by Changing Ireland Community Media Ltd, an independent, not-for-profit NGO, based in Moyross, Limerick, core-funded through the Community Division of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.

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Syrian artist Nizar Ali Badr uses stones to highlight the plight of refugees and of his people. He makes his work publicly available.

Carrickmines candlelit vigil screengrab courtesy of RTE.



INDEPENDENT

'Changing Ireland' is an independent publication core-funded by Government since 2001:



Comhshaol, Pobal agus Rialtas Áitiúil
Environment, Community and Local Government

SOCIAL INCLUSION AND COMMUNITY ACTIVATION PROGRAMME

The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 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. It has a budget of €28m from April-December 2015.

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

SICAP's aim is to reduce poverty, promote social inclusion and equality through local, regional and national engagement and collaboration."

The Programme is underpinned by a Community Development approach.

Most of the work on-the-ground covered by this magazine is funded through the SICAP. In this edition, we also focus on LEADER and a number of other important participatory initiatives.



Tá siad ag teacht - agus tá fáilte romhaibh



The plight of those driven from their homes by war has brought out the best in our citizenry and long may that continue. Irish people have a history of expressing solidarity with people who are persecuted and we simply must welcome in refugees fleeing horrors that are comparable on a daily level to the attacks on Paris recently.

We try to erase the sense of there being a 'them' and 'us'.

Recently, a close friend's nephew crossed the Sahara, Libya and the Mediterranean and landed in Italy. The journey took many months and his mother was beside herself with worry. He cannot return home now, it would be dangerous.

How we respond to my friend's nephew's arrival and the arrival of millions of others is going to define us Irish and Europeans as a people.

From Ireland, we the people have already stretched out a welcoming hand, as people rose as one to organise a convoy of aid for refugees stuck in Calais, France.

Our response showed how civil society can take the lead and respond promptly, while EU and national governments have failed the refugees in Calais in particular.

In fact, the State can consider itself lucky that thousands of Irish people and many civil society groups stand ready to assist in the welcoming and integration of refugees who will arrive here through official channels shortly.

Community development support must be central to integration plans

for arriving refugees.

But are the intermediary structures for feeding up policy proposals from grassroots organisations to local government sufficient to ensure the voices of the most vulnerable are heard?

We must work to ensure that the new Public Participation Networks and Local and Community Development Committees are sufficiently strong to serve the interests of the most marginalized. If more resources are needed, they should be provided.

If the six-year Local Economic and Community Plans don't sufficiently cater for the most vulnerable, including refugees and Travellers, they should be revised accordingly.

Only a year or so ago, local authorities were invited to participate in a pilot project involving Travellers in the design of their own accommodation (Cena). Around one in three applied.

Post-Carrickmines, the Government should accede to Traveller requests for an independent Traveller accommodation agency to support local authorities to fulfill their obligations.

Local authorities cannot be allowed to evade their duties.

We should embrace challenges, empower those who are most vulnerable and work in solidarity with them. What if the shoe was on the other foot and, for example, Western Europeans were fleeing south and east? We face challenging times in a changing world.

I recall a line printed in stencil above the doorframe of a bookshop in Paris where I stayed for a few days by invitation some years back. Written by the late George Whitman, proprietor, it read:

"Be not inhospitable to strangers, lest they be angels in disguise."

Allen Meagher

FILE A REPORT FOR US!

If you believe in Community Development and enjoy writing, why not file a report for us about your community project and what makes it unique. 300-400 words is plenty (and a photo if possible). Certain criteria apply. Your first point of contact should be the editor.



Published By: 'Changing Ireland' is the most popular and widely-read magazine emanating from the Community & Voluntary Sector. Focused on Community Development, managed and published by Changing Ireland Community Media Ltd., it is core-funded by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.

Postal address: 'Changing Ireland', c/o Community Enterprise Centre, Moyross, Limerick.

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Packing and Distribution: Speedpak, Dublin.

Printed by: Davis Printers, Limerick.

Voluntary Board of Directors: Cathy Jones, Claire Gallery, Ellen Duffy, Gearóid Fitzgibbon (chair), George Clancy, Jude Meaney, Kay Flanagan, Seamus McGiff and Viv Sadd.

Thanks To . . .

'Changing Ireland' thanks everyone involved in the production of Issue 51.

Disclaimer

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

**MADE IN MOYROSS
LIMERICK**

IRELAND-CALAIS

In dread of what winter will bring for refugees

- Day 3 in Calais, with convoy leader Tracey Ryan

Tracey Ryan, leader of what began as a trip in a van with her husband and a few pals with provisions for refugees stuck in Calais, described the French shanty town as "the worst place I've ever seen and the best place I've ever visited."

She kept notes on Day 3 in particular: "You can't walk two steps without being stopped to hear another story from another amazing brave soul," she said.

She described meeting "incredible, resilient, resourceful people", some of them angry at French police brutality. Many of the refugees are educated and skilled.

Every night hundreds try to escape Calais through the Channel Tunnel; a mere three or four succeed.

Akmed, an engineer from Syria who had arrived recently, pointed out to Tracey, that the decade-old refugee camp has neither a dentist nor a psychologist.

Tracey found it hard to meet Akmed's eyes: "He was tall and dressed well, he spoke with perfect English and intelligence, but his eyes were so sad."

Given the horrors of the sea voyage he'd been through and his grief over the loss of his sister and two brothers in the war, Akmed genuinely feared he might lose his mind. His parents, stuck in Syria, were in just as desperate straits as him. They got to speak only occasionally by phone.

He said he and his friends in the camp - some now "crazy" with boredom, grief and desperation - all needed to see psychologists. He also needed a dentist.

"None of us ever dreamed this would be our lives at any point," he told Tracey.

There is no other town in France, indeed Europe, with a population of 5,000 without the services of such professionals.

Tracey left Akmed - the encounter like others unforgettable for her - and went to deliver a gas stove to three Eritrean girls (aged 17, 21 and 23) she first met two days earlier. They sat her down and braided her hair for her.

Tracey noticed new tents where there hadn't been any the day before.

She witnessed a father and son, origin unknown, arrive wide-eyed into the camp for the first time. They were welcomed by residents and volunteers.

Then heavy rain came: "Tents flooded or fell over, paths flooded, people had to move from where they were to higher ground or just another patch less soggy."

The many thousands of pairs of shoes from Ireland should soon prove popular

among the many wearing only flip-flops or crocs and unprepared for the winter.

"I dread what it will bring," said Tracey.

Her friend and co-leader Róisín Ní Gháirbhith reported, "Many times I was close to tears today."

However, their group of 53 had built a solid refuge for women and children in crisis, built a small house for a pregnant woman and her family. Tracey is five-months pregnant herself.

Their medics treated 200 people per day, over a thousand people, one fifth of the entire population, in one week.

"The rest of our group pick litter, distribute donations and sort the charities

warehouse. Walking through the camp each day, we are constantly connecting with people and seeking to meet their needs," she said.

Their 'Comms Team' produced reports that would otherwise never have been published or broadcast, including video footage of police brutality towards camp residents broadcast across Europe. Tracey had feared that on arrival there wouldn't be much they could do.

The group is now determined to return; in fact, some volunteers have decided to stay



Tracey Ryan got the ball rolling.

on longer immediately.

Her group meanwhile wants to see an end to Ireland's "tortuous" direct provision system: "There is no point in crying for refugee children drowning in the Mediterranean if we cannot treat the refugees here in Ireland with basic respect and dignity," she said.

'The Jungle' through Irish eyes

• *'The Jungle' is filthy and chaotic, yet is a functioning, welcoming village with shops and restaurants run by refugees.*

• *Some refugees are kids, 16 year old boys with romantic notions, they think they will be playing football for Man United and going to college once they get into the UK.*

• *The French police allow them to get miles into the tunnel, and when they are tired they are waiting for them with tear gas and dogs.*

• *"Are you not terrified?" I asked three Eritrean girls aged 17, 21 and 23. "No" they said, "It's worse in Eritrea."*

- Tracey Ryan

IRELAND-CALAIS

Roisin heartened by phenomenal Ir

- "Lots of people who were never activists now want to stay involve

BY ALLEN MEAGHER



Roisín Ní Gháirbhith from Clare.

Roisín Ní Gháirbhith was interviewed by 'Changing Ireland' just before she stepped onboard the ferry at Rosslare with 53 volunteers from over 20 counties in October. Each person had committed to volunteering for one week in Calais, France.

A mum-of-one from Inagh, Co. Clare, Roisín works as an environmental education officer with An Taisce.

Even before the world was stirred by photographs of Aylan Kurdi's body washed up on a beach in Turkey, she had committed to going to Calais.

"My friend Tracey in Cork got the idea to go over with her husband in a van. They rang me up and I said 'I'll go with ye'. That was the start.

We put it out on Clare FM and set up the Clare to Calais page and all of a sudden we had 25 depots across Clare."

The depots quickly filled up with donations of shoes, clothes, tents and so on.

Cash donations also flooded in and on October 3rd the convoy departed. By that time, around €100,000 had been donated nationally.

"A friend of mine set up the Clare to Calais Facebook page and in no time we had over 10,000 hits.

Roisín was heartened by the phenomenal response nationwide. In no time at all, 'Ireland-Calais Refugee Solidarity' had been formed.

"It's great that we've created an avenue so that people can contribute," she said modestly. "We also wanted to raise awareness."

"In my own little village, a lot of the old people came out for the fundraiser. We got help from lots of tradesmen who haven't done anything like this before. It was the same with medical people who put themselves forward and young people who had never been involved in anything before.

"Refugees who live in Clare helped too, as did the media who gave us free adverts.

"The amazing thing about this is that lots of people who were never activists now want to stay involved. It's very grassroots. Help has been given all across Ireland.

"We collected so much that - before going to Calais - we sent three trucks directly to Syria through an NGO we met called 'Human Appeal'. They had all the logistics worked out, but they didn't have the supplies or the money; we had an excess of what we needed," she said.

As the simple project to reach out and express solidarity with refugees on the continent rolled into becoming an overnight international NGO without any paid staff, Roisín knew she had to take care of herself.

HUMAN-TO-HUMAN

She continued with her yoga and beach-walks. Therapeutic massages and acupuncture from friends also helped.

It was just as well. While she was heartened by the bravery shown by refugees in Calais, and although she had "worked in a refugee camp in India many years ago", she was in tears over the conditions she witnessed in Calais.

"It seems to me that everybody in Ireland sees this as a human-to-human thing - no issue about where they're coming from or what they're doing there. They see humans suffering and know we can do something about it," she said.

As someone who engages professionally in community-related work, she was not taken aback that the Sector did not step out in front in responding to the refugee crisis.

At local level, Clare Women's Network raised €700 for convoy through three charity fundraising events. From Cork, a youth and community worker who is currently engaged in studies, joined the convoy.

However, Roisín had not heard from - nor possibly heard of - the Public Participation Network or the Local and Community Development Committee in County Clare, part of the new social inclusion infrastructure being set up nationwide.

"I think that a lot of the people who work in Community Development are probably burnt out. It's tough work. I didn't expect them to have the time and energy to come on board necessarily."

Nonetheless, development



Seven-month old Misermasu enjoying a tickle from Colette Ni Eachtarn who said the baby stole her heart. Colette was part of the convoy that travelled to Calais, France, recently.

Irish response
ed. It's very grassroots"



Irish teams built a women and children's refuge during their week in Calais.

workers such as Una Ryan in Waterford and Kathy O'Hare in Cork joined the campaign.

They are also working with some civil society groups with years of experience.

"We're in talks with St. Vincent de Paul and The Simon Community so we can give aid to the Irish people in need as well, particularly the homeless," she said.

Despite our own challenges, Roisin has

Roisin has "no doubt" that Ireland has the capacity to welcome 4,000 refugees

"no doubt" that Ireland has the capacity to welcome 4,000 refugees.

"That equals less than 0.1% of a population increase. We have a quarter of a million empty houses in this country and we've enough supplies to clothe and feed them all."

Her group is preparing: "We held back 28 pallets - collected by supporters in Belfast - for refugees when they arrive in Ireland."

She called for the ending of direct provision for asylum-seekers already in the country and for a more "humane" integration process for new arrivals fleeing war and poverty.

She fears that institutional racism may be more prevalent than racism from the general public. With the exception of one negative comment from just one of her 1,000+ Facebook 'friends', Roisin had met only with a positive response from people across Ireland to the crisis.

Team in Clondalkin has a proven model for integration



Alpha Gassama speaking in the Mansion House, Dublin. iVosta is seen as a role model of integration.

BY RAY LUCEY

"The vision of iVosta is unique not only in Ireland but across Europe," says Paula Galvin, the newly appointed CEO of an innovative organisation that believes in volunteering as a powerful and effective means of integrating migrants into Irish society.

Based in Clondalkin and entirely volunteer-run, the organisation has national aspirations.

"We support social integration and progressive community development through a range of environmental, educational and cultural projects," she said.

Paula is known locally for the Fair Trade campaign she spearheaded. She has a strong interest in global citizenship and social activism.

"While iVosta has been in existence since 2009, it is hoped that our restructured and reinvigorated team will use their considerable experience to expand iVosta on a national level," said Paula.

iVosta is the brainchild of Alpha Gassama who featured previously in 'Changing Ireland' (Autumn '14).

A former asylum seeker who spent nearly a decade in Direct provision system, Alpha is known in the Clondalkin area as the founder of Clondalkin TidyTowns and for his passion for social inclusion. He believes: "Volunteering can help you integrate" and iVosta encourages asylum-seekers to donate some of their time, skills and energy to work with local people".

The team also includes: Dilyana Ryan who is responsible for research and development in iVosta and Mark Kelly who has a particular interest in children's rights.

"Alpha has worked tirelessly on behalf of this community of Clondalkin to make integration a reality," said Paula. "Despite suffering many setbacks, Alpha has displayed tremendous courage in making his singular vision of social inclusion a reality."

Plans have been made to support:

- The provision of translation services.
- Community festivals.
- Environmental projects including TidyTowns.
- Global Citizenship Schools initiatives.
- Fairtrade campaigns.
- Intercultural events.

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Our next edition will feature an interview with Paula Galvin (above).

'EMERGENCY MEETING' CALLED OVER COMMUNITY SECTOR RESPONSE

- Various supports available to refugees



Back: Abss Bature Ann Irwin, CWC; Sinead Smith, Cultúr; Siobhan O'Donoghue, UPLIFT; Chinenye Anomeje. Front: Wandile Mohele and Lucy Peprah.

PHOTO: MARK QUINN.

BY MARK QUINN

The Community Workers Co-Operative (CWC) called a national "emergency" meeting on September 17th for members and others interested in discussing the role of the Community Sector in responding to the emerging refugee crisis.

A week earlier, it had been announced that refugees coming here shortly will be allowed to work and their families will join them as soon as possible.

In the meantime, much work is going on behind the scenes at government level and in public at meetings called by concerned community groups such as Doras Luimni.

The CWC meeting took place in the offices of the Migrants Rights Centre Ireland on Dublin's Dame Street. It was called at short notice and was attended by 16 community workers and representatives from various community organisations.

A representative from a Dublin city organisation said: "The worry is that this is going to impact on the housing crisis. We're very lucky that the initial arrival of migrants hasn't led to any organised racism and that's down to the skills of communities."

The community workers present agreed that solidarity with people in direct provision and people caught up in the housing crisis would be core to a response based on community development principles.

In terms of resourcing, the group heard that many of the country's community workers are taken up with the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP). Ideally, flexibility would be shown.

Refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants are among the national programme's target groups.

"Funding needs to be additional so it's not taken from other projects," it was stated.

It was proposed that a local response would be needed but within a national framework.

It was accepted that there would need to be some process of centralisation initially to allow for medical assessments and other measures.

However, it was proposed that this period should be no longer than eight weeks.

The current system of direct provision was a primary focus in the discussions with everyone in attendance deeming it was not fit for purpose.

The meeting felt that Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) may be capable of providing local support and expertise and the meeting discussed writing to each LCDC to ask them to integrate a refugee strategy into their Local Economic and Community Plans which are due for completion by year's end.

The CWC has since distributed to various government departments and published on its website (www.cwc.ie) "a comprehensive approach to supporting refugees that are to be located in Ireland".

NATIONAL PROGRAMME'S TARGET GROUPS

Target groups at the highest risk of social exclusion are prioritised under SICAP, as well as individuals who are living in disadvantaged areas. The target groups are:

- Children and Families in Disadvantaged Areas.
- Lone Parents.
- New Communities (including refugees/asylum seekers).
- People in Disadvantaged Communities.
- People with Disabilities.
- Roma.
- The Unemployed (including those not on the Live Register).
- Travellers.
- Young unemployed people living in disadvantaged areas.
- Young people aged 15- 24 years who are not in employment, education or training.

NEWS BRIEFS

WISDOM OF YEARS OF EXPERIENCE AVAILABLE

News brief sub

Earlier this year, the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland and the Community Workers Co-op together ran a workshop focused on the "critical issues of the day facing migrants."

The training was offered for free to personnel in community, voluntary, local development and ethnic-led organisations that support migrants and refugees.

W: mrci.ie and cwc.ie

DONEGAL CO.CO. VERY SUPPORTIVE

News brief sub

In Co. Donegal, the local authority played a significant role, along with local media and local transport companies, in collecting donations for the Ireland to Calais Refugee Solidarity Group convoy.

A total of 18 pallets loaded with essential supplies were collected in the county. Donations included blankets, sleeping bags, tents, men's clothes, children's clothes and toiletries.

"The generosity of the people of Donegal has been outstanding," said Donegal County Council CEO, Seamus Neely. He singled out for thanks Duffy Express Freight from Newtowncunningham who provided their services free of charge, collecting the donations from seven drop-off points around the county and helping to sort them.

The volume of donations "reflected the goodwill and generosity of Donegal people", Mr Neely said.

Local authority staff lent support elsewhere. For instance, Clare County Council staff organised a whip-around in the workplace.





Kidpreneurship hits the greens of West Cork



BY BEN PANTER

The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme's new target-driven regime has delivered what seems like a successful and certainly fun programme to impact on the lives of 10 to 12 year olds in West Cork.

And if Donald Trump's presidential bid grinds to a shuddering halt, then at least Clonakilty could provide the latest batch of apprentices.

Kidpreneur, the new SICAP-funded programme delivered by the West Cork Development Company ran a three-day summer camp after the success of a similar programme in local schools.

Kathryn Kingston explained, "Basically, under the new SICAP programme, we have to come up with an idea to work with 160 kids on the West Cork lot and 86 kids on the Bandon/Kinsale lot. So we literally created this from scratch.

"First we ran an all-schools programme. We covered Bandon, Dunmanway, Skibbereen and Carrigaline. It was a four-week programme, one hour a week.

"What we wanted to do was to bring it out into the community afterwards. We followed it up with summer play-camps in residential estates. We didn't blast advertising across the community, we actually went straight into the community and recruited them," she said.

That may seem like an approach more akin to Navy press-ganging (maybe they are used to it in sea-faring West Cork) but it helped reach a greater diversity of kids according to Kathryn:

"Mostly we met them out on the green. We talked to them about what we were doing and it worked.

"It is an unusual way, but it gets right to the people that we want to get, because if you



Nathan Hanrahan and Gavin Coakley at an entrepreneurs' brainstorming session.

PHOTO: BEN PANTER.

put an advert in the 'paper then you only get the kids who already look up newspapers and already do things. This gets the type of kids who might otherwise miss out," she said.

Kathryn's assistant Corina Hanrahan (on work placement from UCC's Department of Marketing & Management) explained the creative ethos behind the pragmatism of kiddie capitalism.

"It's ideas generation, not business in a bag - they are here working with loads of different textiles and mediums, while others are going to work online. The slant is very much on ideas generation and entrepreneurship should be about that."

The hardest working member of the team Samara Hanrahan-Thomas (15) told Changing Ireland, "I am showing them all the ideas they can use - I had my own business when I was younger selling jewellery, so I show them how

to make it and pass on selling skills."

West Cork Development company have delivered one of the first brand new programmes under the new target driven regimen of SICAP and it looks like a success and certainly fun.

But that's enough from the grown-ups - what do the next generation of movers and shakers think?



Kidpreneurs: West Cork's programme is different to the national Junior Entrepreneur Programme which runs for 10-16 weeks, is more intensive and must be delivered in schools by teachers.

Promoting best practice: Here's how it works

Kidpreneur is an entrepreneurial education programme for primary school children combined with a practical project in an out of school setting. It is geared towards children in 5th and 6th class in primary school.

The Kidpreneur Summer Programme ran summer camps that were marketed to children and parents as something "exciting, engaging and rewarding that kids can do in their spare time".

In the camps, the children explore:

- what product they would like to make,
- how to market that product,
- who will buy the product and
- how to cover their costs so as to make a profit.

The programme immerses the children in a real business experience in their local area, from which they should emerge with



extra pocket money from their endeavours. Engagement with customers at a market stall allows the children gain a multitude of actual skills comprising social communication, confidence, money handling and working as a team.

Camps during the summer were held in Skibbereen, Dunmanway and Clonakilty.

The outcome - young business minded individuals bursting with creativity and originality of thought.

For more information, contact Kathryn Kingston.

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W: www.facebook.com/KidpreneurCork

Caption (left): Kelly Oforji hard at work.

Travellers' deaths spur renewed protests that date back to the 1960s

BY BEN PANTER

The Carrickmines tragedy in which ten people died represents the greatest loss of life due to fire since the Stardust disaster almost 35 years ago.

In the immediate aftermath, as tributes were being paid to the deceased, which included four children, the issue of housing for Travellers became a subject for national debate.

Protests since the fire have been highlighted by the media, which may lead to the impression that Travellers are only beginning to mobilise for more equitable housing rights.

As is often the unfortunate case, it takes traumatic events to highlight injustice and to pressurise governments into change. However, less than two weeks prior to the tragedy a new housing association was launched by Minister of State Paudie Coffey with the aim of tackling the issue of accommodation.

Cena – the Cant word for home – was set up to build and develop culturally appropriate housing.

Bridgie Casey, accommodation officer with the Irish Traveller Movement (ITM) said at the launch, "It is very hard to see my people living in despicable conditions... now is the time to generate new thinking."

Thomas McCann of the Traveller Counselling Service also expressed the concerns of many, "I question the local governments' commitments because lots of funds budgeted for accommodation were returned to central government."

According to figures in 'The Guardian' newspaper that amounted to €282 million in unspent funds over a decade.

A VERY RELEVANT QUESTION

Minister Coffey responded to concerns from the floor about local authorities, "This is about building confidence in local authorities as well...Some are better than others...I believe Cena is very important because it is setting the agenda and setting the benchmark."

While eleven county councils applied to be part of the Cena pilot, most did not.

Carrickmines may thrust the issue of Traveller housing into the public eye but as the Cena launch shows the issue is not a new one. Neither are the protests that have been highlighted since.



Children and women make the point clearly about Traveller rights. Photo courtesy Pavee Point.

Bridget Quilligan of ITM told 'Changing Ireland':

"Carrickmines has to act as a catalyst for change. It's a fact that Travellers have been protesting since the 1960's."

"We have sat down with agencies and nothing has changed," she said.

Cena is admirable in that it gives ownership of housing development to the Travellers and has united support within the community but it does not absolve the State of their responsibilities, according to Bridget.

'STOP THE STONE-WALLING'

"It is not the solution, it is one solution, Traveller-led accommodation for Travellers," said Bridget.

"One of the main things is for us to run it as a community, to participate and drive change – the structures that are there are inadequate."

"What we are looking for is the Department and local authorities to accept that Travellers have real needs and stop the stone-walling around the progress of development of Travellers accommodation," she added.

In 2002, legislation was introduced by the then Department of the Environment and Local Government making it illegal to camp in public areas, including on roadsides.

At that time, 1,200 families were still without accommodation promised to them in 1995.

The legislation was denounced - to no avail - by the Irish Human Rights Commission



'No change, no progress' from 1984-2015. A poster that featured in a protest in Dublin on October 28th. Pavee Point urge people to sign their petition and letter to An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, seeking to achieve progress on Traveller rights.

Link: <http://bit.ly/1KdzoK>

and the Irish Council for Civil Liberties, as reported in our Summer 2002 edition (cover story and pages 10-11).

REMEMBERING THE VICTIMS

The people who died in the fire in Carrickmines were:

Thomas Connors (27) and his wife Sylvia (25), their sons Jimmy (5) and Christy (2) and baby daughter Mary (5 months), Willie Lynch and his partner Tara Gilbert and their children Kelsey (4) and Jodie (9). Tara was four months pregnant.

Willie's brother Jimmy Lynch (39) also died in the fire.

Two children from Thomas and Sylvia Connors's family survived, brothers Michael (7) and Tom (4).

'Changing Ireland' offers it's sincerest condolences to the families of the victims and to the community.

Travellers Accommodation

NEW TRAVELLER-DESIGNED ACCOMMODATION PLAN LAUNCHED 2 WEEKS BEFORE TRAGEDY

Cena pilot will see €2m spent on 10 units over next 2 years

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

The need for Travellers to have a central role in designing their own accommodation units was recognised at the annual general meeting of the Irish Traveller Movement (ITM) in late September when a new housing association called Cena was launched.

It will see 10 Traveller-designed accommodation units built on two sites in Galway and Offaly by 2017 at a cost of €2m.

During the questions and answers session that followed, delegates quoted statistics and facts that are an embarrassment to the State - and successive governments - in terms of unmet commitments to providing Traveller accommodation.

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, Paudie Coffey, who launched the initiative, said he believed that someday sanctions will apply to local authorities that fail to meet their responsibilities, but he could not give a commitment on that or on a national Traveller Accommodation Agency.

He said however that his Department was "fully supportive" of Cena and he applauded ITM for "displaying leadership".

The launch was - coming before the fatal fire in Carrickmines - a cause for celebration at the time. A small win, but seen as important.

Bridget Quilligan of the ITM thanked in particular the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and their officials "for their commitments to Cena". Three years ago, the Department got behind ITM's vision.

The approach being pioneered is a new way of working with the community and nine local authorities applied to be considered for the pilot.

"It is significant that (most) County Councils did not apply," she said. "This was despite the fact that there have been many cuts over the past 16 years and an increase

in homelessness today."

Accommodation officer Bridgie Casey said, "A core focus of Cena is that Travellers have a right to a home."

The Cena approach consists of three stages: pre-development, site-development and ongoing support after the units are occupied.

"It is important that Travellers take ownership of their homes," she said.

It means residents must engage in community leadership and develop the capacity to fully represent themselves.

A partner in the pilot, Jack Keys, said his company is committed to social justice.

"Cena hasn't the blueprint and it hasn't cracked, but we will learn from the pilots... This is a matter of building communities. Almost all other Government departments must contribute," he said.

Commenting on the majority of local authorities whose spending on Traveller accommodation fell far short of what was required and who did not express an interest in Cena, he said: "It's not a lack of resources, but a lack of attitude and commitment."

Martin Collins from Pavee Point, and a member of the Traveller Accommodation Committee, said at the launch, "I welcome this although it is not the solution. Responsibility still lies on local authorities and on central government. ITM, Pavee Point, the Traveller Women's Forum and others want a national Traveller Accommodation Agency."

Chrissie O'Sullivan, co-ordinator of the Traveller Visibility Group in Cork, said,



Bridgie Casey, Minister Paudie Coffey, Bridget Quilligan and Catherine Joyce at the launch.

"The days are gone for local authorities to manage local authority accommodation."



Asking a question after the launch of Cena.

Grief, sympathy and support nationally

In the hours after the fire at Carrickmines, Southside Travellers Action Group (STAG) opened their doors to the survivors and has been steadfast in supporting them.

Notwithstanding the protests by a minority over where the survivors would be rehomed, nationally there was an outpouring of support.

The Irish Traveller Movement said, "There has been an overwhelming response by all communities who are eager to mark the tragedy through support - emotional and financial - and through human solidarity for those affected and their lost loved ones."

The tragedy raised fears that are being addressed by a national review of fire safety in Traveller accommodation.

"Travellers living on sites in southside Dublin and around the country have been worried about fire safety since the tragedy," the Irish Traveller Movement said.

"Officials from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government met STAG to discuss fears about fire safety and told the group that fire services across the country will be asked to lead a concentrated programme of risk management and fire prevention in those communities most at risk," ITM said in its statement.

Those involved directly in providing support to the survivors included the Traveller Counselling Service, the Parish of the Travelling People, representatives of the

HSE, the Department of Social Protection, the St Vincent de Paul, the Garda's community liaison service, Southside Partnership, the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown and Wicklow County Councils.



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

COMMENT

VITAL WE REALISE HOW IMPORTANT LOCAL PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORKS ARE

- Responsibility also on government and local authorities

Partnership and collaboration between the local authority, inter-agency groups and the voluntary/community sector is now central to community development in modern Ireland.

Both policy formulation and programme implementation is negotiated, planned, resourced, interpreted and prioritised at this level. The Public Participation Network (PPN) is now the preferred structure for such interaction.

It is therefore vital that communities and social inclusion target groups not only realise how important they are, but are resourced and trained to play a full role.

PPNs were proposed by a Working Group on Citizen Engagement as a way to encourage more extensive and diverse input by citizens into the decision making at local government level. They will take an active formal role in policy-making and oversight committees of the authorities.

They will be the main link through which the Council will connect with the community, voluntary and environmental sectors, without prejudice to other consultation processes. It will be a central

forum for the identification of research and policy needs at an inter-agency level and between statutory and voluntary sectors.

PPNs are designed to play a central role in facilitating effective, equitable and transparent communication between local authorities and communities and interest groups.

Therefore, PPNs and their members must be supported to develop their capacity to be inclusive and effective and to ensure that the gap does not widen between groups with high social capital and the vulnerable socio-economic groups targeted by programmes such as the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme.

People with experience of poverty and exclusion require adequate support, training and mentoring to engage in a meaningful way with PPNs.

These supports are outlined by the Department of Environment, Community & Local Government in 'Guidelines for Public Participation' (April 2014) but it is imperative that they are provided in reality.

AUTONOMY

PPN resource workers' independence is "an express condition of funding"

Public Participation Networks (PPNs) have now been established in all local authority areas, with secretariats in place and employees in position or recruitment in progress.

This follows the release of funding announced in June by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government to the tune of €2.5m to support the operation and development of PPNs.

It is "an express condition of funding" that the resource worker operates independently of the local authority and be answerable to the PPN Secretariat in the performance of their duties.

The funding allows for up to €50,000 per local authority area, so long as the local authority contributes an additional

€30,000.

This funding covers:

- The costs of employing a resource worker.
- The cost of office space, infrastructure and materials for the resource worker.
- Costs associated with holding meetings, training, elections, publicity, insurance etc.
- Secretariat and PPN representatives' expenses (eg attending meetings).



Learning the lingo



Not THAT L.A.!

PPN

Public Participation Network. There is generally one for each local authority district. They provide the avenue for formal civil society interaction with local authorities. Before PPNs, there were Community & Voluntary Fora.

PLENARY

The word 'plenary' is derived from the latin word plēnārius or plēnus, meaning full. So, a 'plenary session' is made up of everyone entitled to be present.

In PPN terms, the plenary is the name given to full meetings of the PPN members from all municipal districts within a local authority area.

The plenary is the decision-making body of the PPN where members are balloted on decisions to be made.

SECRETARIAT

The administrative body of the PPN. Each municipal district nominates a member to sit on the secretariat.

LA

Local authority. These are city or county councils. There is one in each county, two in Cork and Galway and four in Dublin.

AUTONOMY

Self governing or independent.

SPC

Strategic Policy Committees. Each local authority has a number of these advisory sub-committees in areas such as environment and housing.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Some view 'civil society' as a form of power from below. There are numerous definitions. Irish Aid sees 'civil society' as "the space between the household and state, where citizens organise to provide or advocate for services and institutions that the state fails to provide or does not have a responsibility to provide, but which are considered important or necessary by citizens."

PARTICIPATION - Cork V Limerick

CORK IS BEING TREATED DIFFERENTLY

A Community Worker's view with Siobhan O'Dowd

BY MARK QUINN

Siobhan O'Dowd represents the social inclusion element of Cork City Public Participation Network (PPN). She recently attended a regional PPN meeting held at Knockanrawley Resource Centre in Co. Tipperary along with PPN secretariat representatives from Limerick, Waterford, Tipperary, Cork County and Cork City.

Local Authorities (LAs) led in setting up the PPNs and the networks are now moving towards autonomy.

"It was interesting to hear from different places how PPNs were actually working out," she said.

For instance, the PPNs in Tipperary, Waterford, Wicklow and Carlow have all opted for a third party outside of the LA or the PPN, to act as the employer of the resource worker. Examples of third parties are Local Development Companies or recruitment agencies.

PPNs' independence and autonomy is deemed to be stronger when the resource worker is not employed by the LA.

'ALL THE NEW ABCs'

"I think its new and, on the one hand elections always cause a bit of a stir and there's certainly been a raft of elections between the one for the Secretariat, the JPC*, the LCDCs, or as one person put it - all the new ABCs," she said.

The term Alphabet agencies is used in the USA. In this instance, we have

'Alphabet committees' as a result of 'alignment'.

Siobhan described three Cork PPN meetings where there were great turnouts and "huge engagement".

However, as she and PPN secretariat colleagues Jim Sheehan and Dan Boyle learned in Tipperary, the number of seats on Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) being offered to the Cork City PPN is

"It's technically compliant but not within the spirit of participative democracy."

much more limited than anywhere else in Munster and, it seems, nationally.

There are five Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) in Cork City, four of which are accepting one nominated representative each from the PPN.

Elsewhere, for instance:

- Carlow PPN has three representatives on each of the four SPCs, meaning that they have 12 representatives to Cork's total of four.

- Galway has 11 PPN representatives on the City's five SPCs.

- In Wicklow there are five SPCs, with 2 PPN representatives on the Housing SPC, 2 on the Planning and Development SPC, 1 on Transport, 3 on Community, Culture and Social Development and 1 on

Economic and Enterprise.

- Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown has a total of 20 PPN representatives on their five SPCs. That breaks down as 4 on the Transport SPC, 5 on Community Development, Culture and Aging, 4 on Social Housing, 4 on Planning and 3 on Environment.

CORK ELECTIONS

When the elections for the four PPN nominees to sit on SPCs in Cork took place recently, members were divided on how best to approach the issue:

"Some people felt - 'Don't elect anyone and wait until we get better representation', while some people were saying 'Well perhaps we should take this and hopefully increase the representation afterward'," she said.

She said the criteria laid down in the guidelines for the level of PPN representation on Local and Community Development Committees was "really clear - it couldn't be mistaken".

By comparison, the guidelines are not so clear on SPC representation: "There is a tiny bit of wriggle-room there and if a local authority wants to interpret it really narrowly and really minimalistically, they might actually manage to get away with it."

"It's technically compliant but not within the spirit of participative democracy. At our PPN meeting, we all said very strongly that we want better representation," said Siobhan.

* Joint Policing Committee.

Limerick asks: 'Who'll employ the worker?'

BY MARK QUINN

The Limerick City municipal district PPN met on Wednesday, September 16th, to discuss issues surrounding the set-up of the network.

The administrative body of the PPN, known as the secretariat, is holding meetings in each of Limerick's three municipal districts to discuss issues in advance of a full plenary meeting of all members later this year.

The city PPN meeting was dominated by discussion on how best to employ a resource worker. Bearing in mind the old saying that 'He who pays the piper calls the tune', they had a number of options to consider:

- The PPN as the employer.
- A "host organisation" (eg one of the PPN members) employs the worker.
- The worker is retained on a contract-for-service basis.
- A new person is recruited and the local authority is the employer.
- An existing staff member of the local authority is given the role.

Much of the debate at the meeting

focused on whether the resource worker should be employed by the local authority or the PPN itself.

AUTONOMY V CONVENIENCE

As one member pointed out: "The advantage of the authority being the employer is the costs will be taken into their books. The disadvantage is that we lose our autonomy."

The idea of engaging the services of a local partnership company to employ the resource worker was mooted, but a member who had held a similar role in the past outlined the difficulties of, in essence, reporting to three different employers with three different agendas.

GRADING

The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government guidelines recommend that, where a local authority worker is employed for the role, they should be a 'Grade 5'.

Some of the attendant members felt that, given the inter-agency nature of the job, a 'Grade 7' was needed if the person employed was to fulfil their duties effectively.

NATIONAL WEBSITE

Also on show at the meeting was Limerick PPN's members-only website designed by 'BundlBee Ltd', owners of the domain name www.ppn.ie.

The website has features such as a regional map where users can see the location and contact details for fellow PPN members using filters such as 'social inclusion', 'community & voluntary' and 'environment'.

According to acting PPN Resource Worker, Sinead Doody, this is possible because: "All PPN members have given their details to be used for matters relating to the PPN."

The website also allows each organisation to set up a Facebook style profile where they can hold chats and run polls with fellow PPN members.

LOCAL & COMMUNITY DEV'T

Practice varies in how new social inclusion focused committees operate

-26 of 31 councils reply to our questions

BY MARK QUINN & ALLEN MEAGHER

Changing Ireland contacted all local authorities in the State in relation to the setup of Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs). We wanted to see how accountable and transparent the new structures are to the public and how uniform they are nationwide.

We also wanted to know how open the local authorities were in terms of supplying the public with information.

Of note, 26 LAs responded to our various phone calls and emails; five did not.

There is currently a disparity between local authorities (LAs) in relation to the amount and quality of information they put in the public domain regarding the activities of LCDCs.

The committees were established nationwide last year.

Fingal County Council, for example, makes a huge amount of information in relation to LCDC activity available to the public with meeting agendas, minutes, bulletins, profiles of LCDC members and presentations available from their website.

However, another LA in the same province told us that they do not publish minutes or outcomes of LCDC meetings and did not intend to do so.

SOME, BUT NOT ALL, PUBLISH MINUTES

Of the 26 LAs that replied to questions we posed, 11 said they publish the outcomes of LCDC meetings online in the form of minutes.

Of the 15 that admitted they did not publish minutes, eight authorities firmly intended to start doing so shortly. Three of the remaining seven said they were open to the idea of publishing minutes, while four gave no indication one way or the other.

The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government said it is working with LCDCs to develop and improve their online presence.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS' NAMES ACCESSIBLE



When asked if a member of the public can find out online who is a member of their LCDC, all 26 LAs who responded said "Yes".

Kildare were among the first to launch a dedicated LCDC website (www.kildarelcdc.ie).

ie). This allows people to get information on their LCDC fast without having to navigate their way through the council website. As graphic designers say, "Three clicks or it's not worth it." It means that if users cannot get to the information they want in three clicks, they are likely to leave your site.

However, while the Kildare LCDC website includes names and photographs of all the LCDC members, their contact details are not provided.

NO EASY WAY TO CONTACT LCDC MEMBERS

As a matter of course, LAs have been publishing the names of LCDC members and who or what they represent. However, in general, LCDC members' contact details are not being provided. An exception is Louth County Council which does publish contact email addresses for LCDC members.

A number of LAs pointed to data protection issues, for example when the contact email address provided by a member is a personal one. Yet, LAs wanted to provide a way for the public to contact their LCDC members.

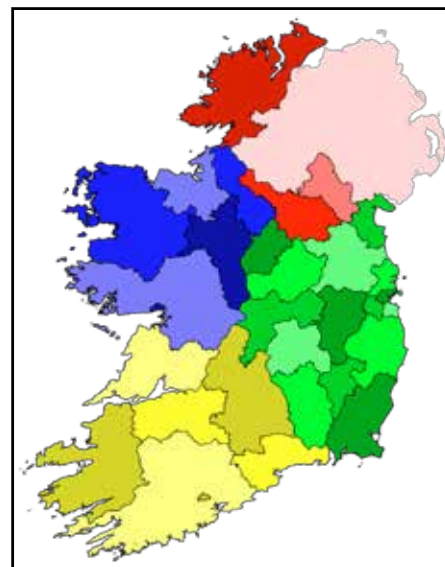
MEETINGS NOT HELD IN PUBLIC

LCDC meetings are not open to the public. This was factored in from the beginning when the policy guidelines were first issued by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government. They state:

"Apart from the LCDC members and the Chief Officer, only those persons who are invited to attend and participate should be present at LCDC. Generally, LCDC meetings are not open to the media or members of the public." *Source: Section 49A(8) of the Local Government Act (2001).*

PUBLIC MAY MAKE PRESENTATIONS

However, as one LA pointed out: "If a member of the public wanted to make a submission to the LCDC that is relevant to their work, then the LCDC will facilitate them."



There are 31 Local and Community Development Committees in the State, set up within local authority boundaries. Their remit includes promoting social inclusion.

The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government's guidelines state:

"Full participation in meetings is confined to LCDC members. Where policy matters of particular interest to local interest groups or other local authority members arise, the LCDC may meet with those local authority members or interest groups, as appropriate."

PARTICIPATION VARIES ENORMOUSLY

Public Participation Networks are also setting up websites and making themselves known to the public.

For instance there are 230 groups registered in Co. Louth, they have a website (www.louthppn.ie) which they managed to get up and running before they were even able to appoint a resource worker. Through the website, their committee members' names and full contact details as well as other information is available.

We have however learned that attendance around the country at Public Participation Network meetings - an integral part in the success or otherwise of LCDCs and the newly 'aligned' structures - varies enormously from place to place.

While up to 150 people representing social, community and environmental groups may show up in one place for meetings, only a handful have become involved in other areas.

This is an issue we will return to.

CAN YOU INFLUENCE CHANGE FROM WITHIN?

- Yes, says Marie Price Bolger (of Trustus in Tallaght) the newly elected chair of the Irish Local Development Network

INTERVIEW: ALLEN MEAGHER

Marie Price-Bolger has been employed for the past 14 years as the CEO of Trustus.

"It was established in 1969, making us the oldest community organisation in Tallaght and employs just shy of 200 part-time and nine full-time staff," said Marie.

She recently spent a week driving around Ireland with five friends from her college days, supporting them on a cycle from Malin to Mizen Head to raise money so Trustus can buy a new meals-on-wheels vehicle.

"We're nearly there," she said on the fundraising.

Marie is chairperson of South Dublin County Partnership, one of the country's 49 local development companies. In June, she was elected as chairperson of their umbrella organisation, the Irish Local Development Network (ILDN). "I'm passionate about the work. I believe in community development, community activism, community engagement and the manner in which our membership go about achieving our social inclusion targets.

"Realistically, without our Sector, a lot of government departments wouldn't be able to deliver," she said.

"I have a great capacity to see all sides of an issue. I can very clearly empathise with the various stakeholders.

"I'm told I am a good arbitrator, I'm fair and try to be as inclusive as possible.

"I'll argue a case I really believe in, but will pull people aside if they're going over the top about issues. I see confrontation as a last resort. Communication and co-operation is far more constructive than confrontation.

"Our work in the ILDN work is voluntary, we believe in it. If we don't fight for the basic principles of community development and social inclusion, we'll end up with a society that is uncaring, unengaged and uninvolved, where people don't know each other and don't interact.

"It may not be visible, but the interaction between the ILDN's sub-groups and government departments is critically important, it helps inform how policy is devised in relation to social inclusion work. "For example, we did huge work around the Tús Scheme and the Rural Social Scheme – they're self-selecting now for 20% of participants, rather than the compulsory attendance approach. (Previously, the Department of Social Protection called on people to participate with a refusal often resulting in a cut to a person's social welfare payments).

"From day one, we were calling for that change. We can't say we were directly responsible, because someone in the Department made the decision, but our 'Enterprise and Employment Working Group' did a lot of work on it, presenting papers to officials and engaging in healthy discussions.

"I hope we become much stronger. The network allows Local Development Companies to come together, work on particular issues, collate information, present a national picture and input into policy.

"We have regular meetings with Department officials and they're very productive. In my view, you're better trying to influence change from within than without and I'd like to think relations with the Department are one of mutual respect and understanding.

"None of us can do this on our own. Government departments bring a particular knowledge and expertise to the table and so do we. They listen to us because we're delivering programmes since the 1990s.

"A huge amount of work is going on in communities all around Ireland.

However, the media always seems to highlight the negative. No matter what walk of life you're in, I think the 80-20 principle applies, where the majority of things – 80% – work extremely well and a minority – 20% – are not as successful.

"I'd like to see a situation where we address what doesn't work without dragging everybody else down with those that are struggling.

"Community development today is in a very fluctuating space. A lot of people have given everything of themselves, completely engaged in their communities in the hope of bringing those communities out of the difficulties. You can only take being knocked back so many times. As money dried up during a very difficult period, across the whole country, people took huge knocks and those that came out through it, did so because they have inner ability to do that.

"We've taken all that's been thrown at us on the chin, not that we took it lying down, even though we fundamentally disagreed with the manner in which it came about

and the process. Now, we're doing our level best to continue delivering quality services to individuals and communities in our areas, with a lot less Government investment.

"From a community development point of view, the new Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) lacks the level of flexibility and adaptation that has always been a cornerstone of Local and Community Development in this country. With the introduction of the public tendering process, the guidelines imposed on our work are much more restrictive than before.

"There's a mid-term review ongoing at the moment, but we'll be able to better analyse SICAP after its first year of operation. It will be a challenge to continue delivering the numbers required at the high quality and intensive interventions that are needed.

"Final decisions haven't been made yet regarding LEADER – but go to any county in Ireland and you'll see evidence of its positive impact, from small-scale to large projects." The community input (bottom up approach) is a vital component for future success.

"As for the ILDN's immediate plans, we are currently conducting a review within the Network, we're forging new alliances and developing our policy positions. That and much more."

W: ildn.ie
W: trustus.ie



A keen sportswoman, Marie Price-Bolger (centre-right) is pictured here with volunteers who cycled the length of Ireland to help raise funds for Trustus. A life-long Manchester United supporter (what can you do!) Marie was manager/ asst. manager to the Irish ladies under-age squads over a 12-year period.



'PROBLEM-SOLVING' IN TALLAGHT

"We cover whatever comes up" - Liz Whelan

**INTERVIEW BY
MARK QUINN**

An Cosán's head of counselling Liz Whelan shares her views on mental health:

I have a problem with the whole idea of calling it mental health. If we could think of another name instead of saying mental health, if we could say something like problem solving... anything that would not give people the feeling that it's something wrong with your head.

The first thing, certainly young men will say to you is: 'Oh, she wants to mess with my head.'

I say, if you have a problem, 'Do you want to solve it or you want it to stay with you for the rest of your life?'

Most people, not everybody, but most people who come in here are not coming in with mental health problems, they're coming in because something has triggered an old feeling that comes popping up the minute they come into a place like this (An Cosán).

They start doing something that they left down years ago because of a problem, because something was going wrong. That problem is still there, they're still feelings and they're still inside us. Feelings are something that you just never get rid of if you don't talk about them and let them go. Otherwise, you're



Liz Whelan at work in An Cosán.

PHOTO: MARK QUINN.

just shoving them down like all your dirty washing down into a basket and the lid comes up every so often.

Counselling here covers whatever comes up. It's not all about mental illness, that's a scary thing to a lot of people.

EDUCATION

As for myself, I put education off for years, I didn't start studying until I was 50. I really feel education is such a great opportunity.

I was stuck myself, and I knew I was stuck. I wasn't mentally ill but I was stuck.

"The whole business of listening is something that most people don't understand"

That's what we're here for really, when people come in and they begin to study and something gets triggered. They suddenly find they're in floods of tears and they're wondering why. They don't even know why.

'What's wrong with you?' you might ask. 'I don't know!' they say.

So that's where we come in, we just listen.

Particularly with teenagers, all they need is somebody to listen. The whole business of listening is something that most people don't understand, because usually they're just waiting for you to finish so they can say what they think. If we can have someone to listen we're all our own best advisors

CHANGING IRELAND

If I could change one thing about Ireland, I would have a counsellor in every school. In Australia there's a counselling department in every school and it works. The kids don't fall through the cracks because they've someone to listen to.

Then they grow up to be full adults instead of half adults. If there's a kid who's struggling, for whatever reason, if they get a chance to talk they can go on to be God knows what. When they don't get that chance, they're just locked in.

A friend said to me, 'If a child is not learning from me, I have to look at the way I'm teaching the child, because there's got to be another way in' and that's really the principle of learning in schools and coming out of it as a whole adult.

An Cosán - the in classrooms (

- Kids cared for in creche
- Centre runs courses for
- Its mission is to eradicate
- The project began in

MARK QUINN REPORTS

An Cosán, situated in Jobstown in Tallaght, Dublin, is a training centre offering a holistic approach to adult education. It was here that Tánaiste Joan Burton, while congratulating graduates, encountered anti-austerity protesters and was penned into her car for some hours last November. The fallout from that episode rumbles on, but what of the work of the centre she visited?

An Cosán has its origins in a 'Personal Development Through

Cookery' course that was run by activists Ann Louise Gilligan and Katherine Zappone in the kitchen of their home in 1985. Thirty years later, a thousand people access the education and support programmes offered by An Cosán every year. The group's mission is to eradicate poverty through education.

Maura McMahon, CEO of the centre explains: "An Cosán is the Irish word for a pathway, but it's a pathway that isn't a straight one. It recognizes that in life we bump into all kinds of obstacles."

An Cosán have responded to these obstacles by putting supports in place around their core adult education services.

The typical classroom layout has been abandoned at An Cosán; steel supported plastic chairs are out and each classroom is fitted out with couches.



Just inside the front gate of An Cosán stands the 'Tree of Hope'. A sign on it reads:

Planted as a symbol to
all
Affected by a suicide
Or
Living with mental health
issues.
We support you all.





school known for much more than couches and Tánaiste Joan Burton's visit)

*the while parents study
for a thousand people a year
cate poverty through education
a kitchen in Tallaght 30 years ago*

Maura explains: "People have to be comfortable on all levels before they can actually get stuck in and learn."

"We have three strands of work here. We have early years which is zero to 12, then we have basic or back to education which are the QQI or FETAC level courses. We also have a partnership

centre. One room is fitted out to accommodate six babies and includes a separate sleeper room. Little mirrors fixed to the walls less than a foot above the ground clearly show this is a place designed with the kids in mind.

The children cared for here may stay one or two days a week while their parent is attending one of

High Scope Curriculum (see side-panel).

An Cosán runs an after-schools programme for pupils aged from four to eleven.

"We collect the kids from school and bring them here," said Anne Genocky, general manager of the centre. "In some cases the parents are accessing methadone programmes so they can go and get their medical needs looked after while their children are safe here."

"There's a programme run with Tusla for children who are referred from families that need additional support.

They may have a developmental delay or could be witnessing domestic violence, alcohol abuse or drug abuse. It could be a crisis or they may just need some additional support to keep them out of crisis," said Anne.

The organisation also runs a hospitality service alongside the path towards accredited degree level education. Receptionist Sharon said: "Many of the parents who arrive in for our courses

might be only able to feed their children and without the meal we provide them, they simply wouldn't eat in the mornings."

The centre also provides a comprehensive counselling service, with ten dedicated counsellors who are available to help the participants with any issues that may manifest as they re-engage with education and move through the process.



Plenty to smile about at An Cosán, Tallaght.



with Carlow IT and run three accredited degree programmes."

The Back to Education programmes start with 'First Steps' courses that help participants ease themselves in by studying English and Personal Development.

'Rainbow House' is An Cosán's early-years

the courses. Whenever there is space, they give it to a family they feel could do with another day.

The 'Wobbler Room' isn't for children throwing tantrums, but for those who are learning to walk and still wobbling - roughly around a year old. There are nine children and three staff members and this is where the children first encounter the

THE HIGHSOPE CURRICULUM

The experiences children have in their first classroom setting can shape their attitude about learning for the rest of their lives.

The Highscope Curriculum used in An Cosán's pre-school programme originated in the US. It addresses the social, emotional, intellectual and physical development of babies, toddlers and young children.

It's popularity is based on studies carried on 123 people who were born into poverty and also deemed to be at high risk of leaving school early. All of them completed the Highscope Curriculum and researchers followed them over the decades that followed (they are now aged 50):

The study found that adults who had completed the pre-school programme:

- earned more money,
- were more likely to have a job,
- committed fewer crimes, and,
- were more likely to have completed high (secondary) school.

Here in Ireland, the Highscope curriculum fits in well with both national quality frameworks - Siolta and Aistear - and it supports best practice in childcare, whereby learning happens best in a social and cultural context.



All smiles: Early year educators Joan Richardson and Marie Murray.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

We rescue quality surplus food

- Foodshare Kerry set up by North & East Kerry Dev't & Vincent de Paul
- Teachers appalled as children arrive hungry
- 5.5m people in EU depend on food banks

BY ROBERT CAREY

The issue of food poverty is now a significant social inclusion issue in Ireland, a situation which was exacerbated by the economic crash.

In a report by the Unite Trade Union on food poverty in Ireland, figures from 2010 showed one-in-ten people in Ireland – or around 457,000 of our fellow citizens – suffered from food poverty.

You experience food poverty if you're someone who missed a meal in the last fortnight because of a lack of money.

Mandate general secretary John Douglas said, "It may mean they cannot afford a meal with meat or the vegetarian equivalent every second day or afford a roast or vegetarian equivalent once a week."

In County Kerry, St. Vincent De Paul saw demand for their service increase with over 1,500 families receiving help in 2013.

Foodbanks are one response to this issue. The first food bank was set up in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1967. The first in Europe opened in Paris in 1985. Last year more than €1bn worth of food was distributed free under the food bank system to 5.5m people across Europe.

Foodshare Kerry, an initiative of North & East Kerry Development and St. Vincent de Paul, is an independent, not-for-profit organisation set up to help local charity groups combat food poverty.

Foodshare Kerry rescues quality surplus food from supermarkets and food producers and make it available to organisations who know how best to redistribute it to those in need. The company is trading since May 2015 and is collecting food from a range of suppliers including Aldi, Tesco, Supervalu, Clifford's Cash & Carry and Lee Strand. They then distribute the surplus food to a range of charities in Tralee and the surrounding area, and plan to expand over the coming months.

'Lost Education', a study commissioned by children's charity Barnardos and cereal company Kellogg's, interviewed more than 500 primary and secondary school teachers about food. The findings were stark and worrying. Almost one-in-five teachers said they had seen an increase in the number of children arriving hungry at school.

Almost 40% of teachers said they had taken food into school for a child who is regularly hungry, while 19% said children are arriving hungry for lessons every day. Just under a third of teachers have seen children fall asleep in the back of the classroom, because they had not eaten.



1. Foodshare Kerry sign up commercial outlets involved in food sales and production throughout Kerry.

They collect their surplus food in specially kitted-out vans, saving companies the cost of dumping.

2. The van delivers the food to Foodshare Kerry's central depot in Tralee, where it is sorted, graded and itemised by a team of volunteers. The unit has all the facilities required to handle the produce.

3. St. Vincent de Paul and other local charities are updated on what food is available. Then, with quiet dignity, these experienced groups distribute family-sized bags around the county to the families and people who need it most.

Why in a land of plenty do we need food banks?

- Latest 'VIEW' magazine focuses on food

The latest edition of VIEW magazine focuses on the food we eat, communities growing their own, social inclusion and health.

The magazine asks, "Why in a land of plenty do we need food banks?" It answers the question through a series of articles and poses further questions such as: "Is organic food just for middle-class people?"

It features Dr Sue Christie who claims it is entirely possible to feed nine billion people sustainably worldwide.

The food-themed edition was published on October 26th, coinciding with the release by the World Health Organisation of research that found eating sausages, rashers, ham and processed food in general can cause cancer.

Brilliant timing, one could say.

The 32-page issue is available through View's website for free.

Strong on Belfast, the food edition also includes coverage of the transformation of a derelict site in Dublin's North Strand into a

thriving community garden.

In recent times, the magazine has reported on child poverty, community use of technology, people with disabilities and homelessness. People are at the centre of their social affairs reporting.

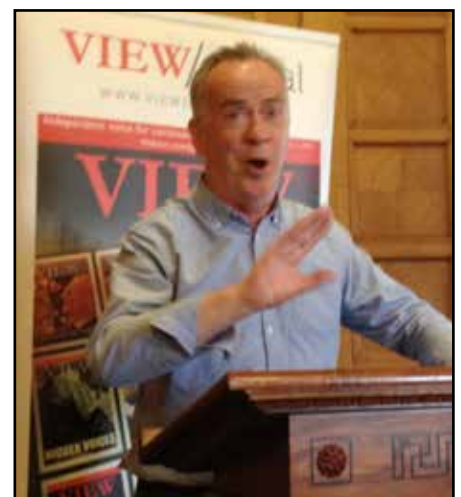
"We ask community activists to guest-edit the publication with us," said co-founder Una Murphy. "Our work helps voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations to get their stories heard online."

Operating as a social enterprise based on the Ormeau Road, Belfast, and edited by (co-founder) Brian Pelan, the magazine is primarily distributed online - you can subscribe for free.

It has a limited print-run and is expanding its distribution through libraries in Ireland north and south. All back-issues are easily accessible on the VIEWdigital website.

The organisation also offers media skills courses and has provided training to hundreds of individuals from the third sector in recent years.

W: viewdigital.org



Brian Pelan, editor, shares his views on child poverty with a group at Stormont, Belfast.

PHOTO: A. MEAGHER.

CLASS MATTERS

€51k in bursaries for 228 students “serves to highlight the barriers”

- More people now going to 3rd level than to prison

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

In the late 1990s, people from Moyross, Limerick, had a higher likelihood of finding themselves behind bars than in third level education. It was a similar story in other areas of the city, then suffering intolerable levels of concentrated poverty and State neglect.

“Back in 1997, we did a survey which found that 69 per cent of the population in Moyross left school early,” recalls Juan Carlos Azzopardi, project leader of Limerick City CDP. “Only four-per-cent had achieved third level at that time. So, statistically, your chances of going to prison were higher than your chances of going to third level.”

“Over 15 years, a citywide bursaries scheme has played a very crucial part in changing that culture”, said Mr Azzopardi.

On the evening of Thursday, October 1st, hundreds of students and their families thronged to Thomond Park for the official presentation of over €51,000 in bursary awards (of between €150 and €450 each depending on need).

The aim was to support and encourage 228 students to apply for and to continue attending third level courses.

The bursaries are for anyone from Moyross, Garryowen, St Munchin's, Southill, Our Lady of Lourdes and King's Island and are seen as a “symbolic” as well as a practical support.

Susan O'Neill of Limerick City CDP said 28 people from Moyross received bursaries this year.

Given the population has more than halved due to house demolitions, in Moyross this represents a quadrupling in the numbers seeking bursaries (a good indicator of 3rd level involvement locally).

Susan O'Neill, who works as the education and training team-leader, explained: “The bursaries help to cover registration fees, books, materials, accommodation and travel costs. However, it's anything but a handout.”

“We see this as a gesture on behalf of the community - saying it's important that young people see third level as an option, that they take the challenge on,” said Susan.

“Yet, regardless of how small it is, students tell us it can make the difference between being able to start or not,” said Susan. “Once they get there they tend to finish. For first years, those bursaries are very important.”

She pointed to a bigger picture, whereby the bursary awards help to identify students who could do with support. The CDP open their doors and offer advice, photocopying, IT support and anything else they can.

The bursaries were funded by Limerick City & County Council's Social Intervention Fund (regeneration grants), St. Vincent de Paul, Limerick Institute of Technology, the JP McManus Trust and Our Lady of Lourdes Local Education Committee.

The lead organisation, Limerick City CDP, supported by Garryowen

CDP are core-funded through the Social Inclusion and Activation Programme (SICAP).

SICAP aims to reach people who are unemployed, even if they are not on the live register.

“We take a community development approach in supporting people to participate in and benefit from life-long learning opportunities,” said Susan.

While the barriers have been weakened in this instance, they still remain.

“The bursary awards are small, but symbolic also,” said Juan Carlos. “They serve to highlight the barriers placed in front of people from disadvantaged areas. Everyone knows that education is crucial to the development of society and to improving people's opportunities. The bursaries are our communities' way of saying to people thinking about 3rd level ‘Go for it!’,” he said.

For 2015, SICAP includes an allocation of €2 million under the European Structural Fund's (ESF) Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020 and €2 million under the Youth Employment Initiative.

“This is anything but a handout”
- Susan O'Neill



Emma and Lisa Roche, both bursary recipients.
PHOTO: BEN PANTER.

CASE STUDY

A mother from Ballynanty, Limerick, ticked a box on a university form for accommodation. Of course she wanted her child to have accommodation, she thought.

On being landed with a bill for €1,000 from the university, she did the sums and told her child they couldn't go to college.

Thankfully, the mother went to LCCDP where they are used to handling formal documents.

The accommodation was cancelled, cheaper off-campus accommodation was found and a bursary was provided which covered the cost of the student's rent deposit. The same student is now in third year.

W: limerickcitycdp.ie
T: 061-328690.



Community workers disperse bursaries.



David, Janessa and Ger Clancy, bursary recipients.



Dr Maria Hinfelaar, President of LIT.

PROGRAMME LAUNCH

NATIONAL POLICY

73 submissions on Local & Community Development

A call for responses as part of a public consultation resulted in 73 written submissions being made to the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government in relation to their planned 'National Framework Policy on Community Development and Local Development'.

The devising of a new 'Framework' is intended to "fill a policy gap" and counter the "ad-hoc development of local and community development structures across the country." Many changes have taken place and been imposed in recent years without an overarching policy framework.

The submissions received called for:

- A greater role for communities in policy development;

- Capacity building, including for local authorities;

- The autonomy of the sector to be maintained;

- Consistency in the definitions of Local Development and Community Development;

- Clarification regarding the role of the National Policy Group;

- More in-depth community input into Local and Community Development Committees and Public Participation Networks.

The Department has since set up an internal working group to see how the feedback can be incorporated into a revised Framework Policy and the Department hopes the final draft will be ready by year's end.

73

Official launch of pro ensuring recovery is

In operation since April, and with a spend this year of €28m, the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) was officially launched on September 23rd by Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Alan Kelly, and Minister of State for Rural Economic Development and Social Enterprise, Ann Phelan.

The Government, Minister Kelly said, saw that "it is vital that we ensure that the economic recovery is a fair one, one from which everyone can benefit. This is where the new SICAP can play a vital role."

SICAP aims to address poverty,

long term unemployment and social exclusion, through local engagement and partnerships between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies.

Minister Kelly said, "If you are unemployed, belong to the traveller or Roma community, are a one parent family, have a disability, are a young person looking for a job or are a migrant, refugee or asylum seeker, then SICAP can help you."

"I have already become aware of the impact the SICAP is having on individuals, families and communities throughout Ireland. I have seen the



€30m to make rural living "more a - Spend it on broadband, respond community le

The Government announced in September a €30m fund spread over six years to improve the look of rural Ireland.

However, some community leaders said the money would be better spent on rural broadband or invested through LEADER.

The Towns and Villages Scheme aims to "increase the attractiveness of rural towns and villages as places to live and work" for example by expanding "greenways, cycleways, blueways" and renovating derelict buildings.

It follows on from recommendations in

the report from the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) which was chaired by former Kerry footballer Pat Spillane.

"Our vision for rural towns, villages is of vibrant, inclusive, well-maintained, economically thriving areas with residential communities balanced in demographic terms with regard to age and gender," said Minister of State for Rural Economic Development and Social Enterprise, Ann Phelan.

"It's for towns and villages that aren't doing very well, with more of an emphasis

programme "vital" to for all

difference it can have on some of the programme's key target groups," he said.

"I am certain that it will have a real impact on the ground, providing key supports to those who need them most so that more people are in a position to avail of Ireland's changing fortunes."

"Through the Local Community Development Committees and programme implementers in each county, SICAP provides education and training courses in areas such as literacy, numeracy and IT skills.

"It offers first-step, back-to-education courses. It can be a pathway to gaining recognised qualifications. SICAP can help people prepare for a job by looking at local employment options and



Minister Alan Kelly (left) and Minister of State Ann Phelan (above) spoke at the official launch of the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme. It took place at the National Ploughing Championship on September 23rd.



Anne Goodwin, CEO of Laois Community and Enterprise Development Company (formerly Laois Partnership) also spoke at the launch.

improving interview skills. It can also advise and provide access to funds to help people start their own business or social enterprise," he said.

Minister of State Phelan said: "A key role of SICAP is to empower citizens and strengthen local communities' capacity to address issues which affect them."

She gave as examples "groups working to promote equal access to employment for people with disabilities or ensuring fair treatment for all, regardless of race, gender, religion, age or sexual orientation."

"SICAP will help ensure that all groups are given a voice in their respective communities so that all citizens can engage and participate fully in society," she said.

€28 million is being invested in communities through SICAP this year. This includes an allocation of €2 million under the European Social Fund (ESF) Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020 and €2 million under the Youth Employment Initiative.

TIDY TOWNS & 1916

Seven Trees for Seven Signatories

sessile Oaks - the State's national tree - will be planted in selected towns and villages as part of the 1916 commemorations.

The announcement was made on September 23rd by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Alan Kelly, and Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Heather Humphreys.

All the villages, towns and cities who have won the overall TidyTowns award since the competition's inception in 1958 will be awarded seven oak trees to represent the seven signatories to the Proclamation.

It's part of a collaboration between the Tree Council of Ireland and the TidyTowns competition to mark the centenary of the 1916 Rising.

"TidyTowns committees are one of the best examples of citizen engagement involving the community and voluntary sector participation throughout the country," said a spokesperson.

Minister Alan Kelly said, "Tidy Towns committees across Ireland have been pioneers in making their towns liveable, vibrant and green communities for nearly sixty years and it gives me great pleasure to be able to recognise their efforts at this important juncture in our history."

Minister Humphreys, said, "We want the 2016 Centenary Programme to reach into communities right across the country, so who better to help us with us than the TidyTowns network."



The seven people who signed The Proclamation.

attractive" with town & village scheme

aders

on enterprise. They just want a bit more support, to make them more attractive. It's been proven that if you have spoken to most communities across Ireland, they don't want to be pitied, they just want to be given support so they can take part in their own recovery and we want to be part of that."

However, the announcement did not go down well.

Maura Walsh, IRD Duhallow - "I welcome any investment for towns and villages because they're on their knees.

"Over €100m was taken out of the

last Leader programme... Another €100m is being taken out of the next Leader programme. All that money used to stay in the local economy and it should be put back in immediately. We've had LEADER since 1991, we're the most successful in Europe because it's bottom-up, community-led," she said.

She added in relation to the scheme, "We would be willing to help in any way we can."

Former community minister, Eamon O'Cuiv, Fianna Fail, said the plan amounted to "a few thousand euro per

village" and said what rural people wanted was "fibre and jobs".

Fr Harry Bohan from Co. Clare described the plan as "a joke", adding, "Rural Ireland is not short of money, but it's going into banks and is being siphoned out of the country." He suggested it would be better to spend the €30m on rural broadband.

Minister Alan Kelly dismissed the criticism: "Remember, three years ago we didn't have 30cents to do something like this, so €30m is a substantial move in the right direction." he said.

Celebrating 50 editions

THE BAND



Ray Murphy and fellow musicians belt out the tunes.

LONGEST DISTANCE



Redemptorist, Fr. Allen O'Brien, from Mindinao, The Philippines, seen here chatting to Siobhan Meagher, the editor's beautiful wife. The Redemptorists have their own development and volunteering programme (www.serve.ie).

PHOTO: BEN PANTER.

FROM BELFAST



Brian Pelan, editor of VIEW Digital, was among the guest speakers. He and his partner Una Murphy travelled from Belfast for the occasion.

PHOTO: BEN PANTER.

LIMERICK VIEWS



Seamus O'Connor, Limerick City & County Council chatting to Anne Kavanagh, CEO of the PAUL Partnership, Limerick.

PHOTO: BRENDAN GLEESON.

Minister O'Sullivan says "a real voice" for communities



Pictured with Minister Jan O'Sullivan (centre) who performed the official launch are (l to r) Allen Meagher, founding editor, George Clancy, civil servant and RWC referee, Jude Meaney, community worker and Gearóid Fitzgibbon, community worker and chairperson of 'Changing Ireland'.

PHOTO: BRENDAN GLEESON.

Education Minister Jan O'Sullivan has praised 'Changing Ireland' for "giving a real voice to communities."

"We really need to hear the genuine voice of community and sometimes the discordant and critical voice. This is very much part of what this publication is about," she said.

The Minister was speaking at the official launch of the magazine's 50th edition which was held outdoors at Sarsfield Gardens Business Centre, which comprises of six bungalows that were refurbished 15 years ago.

The units were once roofless and due for demolition, but local community leaders appealed to the local authority to have faith in the area and to rebuild. 'Changing Ireland' was among the first tenants.

The launch, complete with live band, was a rare public event in Glenagross as it is known locally (the estate was renamed to combat stigmatisation).

Speakers included Belfast-based editor Brian Pelan and Rugby World Cup referee George Clancy.

Guests, including local residents, were welcomed by chairperson Gearóid Fitzgibbon, editor Allen Meagher and journalists Ben Panter and Mark Quinn.

Minister O'Sullivan told the attendance that 'Changing Ireland' could count on continued Government support in a way that "does not expect you to tone down any coverage".

"'Changing Ireland' is giving a real voice to communities and I mean a real voice, not any kind of lip-service. I think the magazine is going to have an even more important role in that regard in the future."

"It raises serious issues and makes people think about communities and not just have very simple ideas about what communities are like, whether they be geographical communities such as Moyross, parts of Dublin, Belfast, or the Philippines... but also communities of people."

"Any support we can give, we're happy to give it, but we'll give it in a way that does not in turn expect you to tone down any coverage, as long as you're fair and impartial."

"We need to ensure that where something really positive is happening in a community that other communities can learn from them. 'Changing Ireland' plays an important role in that," she said.

She enjoyed the magazine's "quirky bits", said it was "widely read among colleagues" and she

endorsed Minister of State Ann Phelan's call in the 50th edition for gender-quotas to be introduced for top local authority positions.

On stereotyping which "has to be challenged at all levels", she said, "Changing Ireland has done an awful lot to do that and is to be commended."

Rugby referee George Clancy highlighted sport's role in community development which he argued should be given more attention.

"Maybe it's because the benefits of sport and community development are really self-evident that they are sometimes overlooked," said Mr Clancy.

Brian Pelan, editor of Belfast-based 'ViewNI' magazine, said community journalism was "tough work", but "important". He and his team looked forward to collaborating with 'Changing Ireland'.

Gearóid Fitzgibbon, chair of Changing Ireland Community Media Ltd, said, "We seek to highlight good practice and question bad practice wherever we go. We take a positive, sustainable and inclusive approach that is uncompromising in its promotion of community development principles and practice."

"We also see communities showing resilience and emerging with their own responses and campaigning for fair play and equality," he added.

Community worker Liz Price said the magazine "brings out how we work in partnership with Government and how much they need us as much as we need them for finance."

Clr. Maurice Quinlivan (SF) said when the magazine began in Moyross in 2001, "It wasn't an easy place for the magazine to operate out of at the time, but ye gave something positive to Moyross. Your project always sent out a good signal. Moyross is in a much, much better place now."

Allen Meagher, founding editor, thanked all involved in the magazine from its birth to the present day and said it would "stay true to its roots in the community". Since 2001, over a thousand pages of journalism about community development in Ireland have flowed from the bungalow.

In the intervening years, hundreds of houses across Moyross were knocked in the name of progress and horses now graze where many of Unit 3's neighbours once lived.

To highlight the slightly surreal environment, guests were greeted on arrival by the sight of a tricolour and a (plastic) lemon tree.

ays magazine is mmunities

"The magazine is going to have an even more important role in that regard in the future"

- Minister Jan O'Sullivan

MOYROSS SUPPORT



Catherine O'Shaughnessy and Noelle Howard from the Community Enterprise Centre, Moyross, with Minister Jan O'Sullivan.

PHOTO: BRENDAN GLEESON.

CITY & COUNTY COUNCILLORS



"Your project always sent out a good signal," said Cllr. Maurice Quinlivan, pictured here with Cllrs. Malachy McCreesh (left) and Séighin O Ceallaigh (right) all from Sinn Féin, at the launch.

PHOTO: BEN PANTER.

LOCAL RESIDENT & HORSE OWNER



Colum Cantillon was among the guests. He is pictured here outside the office with his horse.

PHOTO: BRENDAN GLEESON.

Seriously now...

NEVER GOING BACK TO INCA LAY

HOLIDAY TIME

I was amazed when a buddy said recently she was heading off to visit the jungle 'Inca Lay' and was also going 'in Sol Dardy'. All for free.

I never heard of either and joined her.

The holiday began when 53 of us boarded a bus to the airport, but we drove off in the wrong direction. Where to I pondered?

Adare? Is it risky behaviour to go there?

Courtown? Does it do itself justice?

Roscommon? - People rarely go there.

Jobstown? We were on a holiday.

We ended up on a ferry to France. I nudged my pal, "That's false advertising, you clearly said we're off to 'The Jungle'".

"Duh!" she said, "Soon we'll be Inca Lay".

In fairness, everything was laid on - we had so much grub and changes of clothing with us that we'd way more than we needed and started handing all the spare stuff out to other holiday-makers there. Lots of them grumbled that they didn't want to be there. Moaners.

I was quietly disappointed I saw no elephants or buffalo, but it was just as well as the place was a campsite. There was wildlife around though - sure management had built a double-fence all round to protect us. (They could have spent a teeny bit more on bathrooms. And I could never find reception).

Luckily, 'Inca Lay' is by the seaside, near the Channel Tunnel actually, handy for nipping over to Old Blighty.

OUT OF MY BOX

I'm glad I'm no longer doing community work in Ballybog. My old colleagues - those not made redundant - spend more time on paperwork and form-filling than on community work. I would find my creative genius stunted because they're now spending a lot more time ticking the box instead of thinking outside it.

And the lingo's changing. I heard one worker triumphantly tell another the other day, "I've psychapped twenty so far, how about you?". When they look at you, you can see it in their eyes. They're thinking "Could I psychap him?".

SIZE REALLY DOES MATTER

They'd have the measure of you faster than Bob the Builder; no right-thinking community worker goes anywhere without a ruler nowadays. In particular, the whip is out to ensure workers involved in delivering the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme plaster EU logos on everything that's EU-funded. Get a measurement wrong and there's a financial penalty. If the EU's logo isn't bigger than the Department's one, you might as well clear your desk. From 2016, all clients on ESF-funded schemes will be offered free tattoos.

Two Ballyboggers went to Brussels for a 3-day workshop in EU logos recently. Not ones to miss planes or boats, they've now rolled out a FETAC (Level 5) Cert in EU & Pobal Logo Dimensions. Their courses are packed out after marketing it with the slogan, "Size really does matter, come see for yourself".

PAYBACK!

Ireland beat Germany! Well to be fair, the Germans have been at pains to point out we owed them.
Payback never felt so good!



Community Development Conference hears of grassroots' concerns

BY CATHERINE FORDE



Dr. Catherine Forde, School of Applied Social Studies, UCC.

A conference held in University College Cork on October 21st heard about the challenges that face community development and local development in the context of alignment, competitive tendering and austerity.

Sixty people from the community, voluntary and local development sectors attended the conference which was organised by the Civil Society Research cluster in UCC.

Speakers included Marian Harkin MEP, Brian Harvey, independent researcher, Anna Lee, community development consultant and Mary Fogarty, co-founder of Loughmore

Community Shop and Tearooms, Tipperary.

Other speakers from UCC's Civil Society Research Cluster presented the results of on-going research into the effects of the changing community development and local development landscape on communities, community development organisations and their practice, and on 'the local'.

Marian Harkin argued that rationalisation and centralisation of public policy are leading to the destruction of communities; she suggested that three of the main 'victims' of centralisation are LEADER, credit unions and environmental issues. She criticised the 'closed and predetermined' nature of the competitive tendering process.

Mary Fogarty spoke about the development of the Loughmore Shop and Tearooms, its importance in helping to revitalise the Loughmore community and the support it has received from the LEADER programme.

Brian Harvey gave an overview of the evolution of community development in Ireland; he argued that community development is a victim of the 'unresolved' relationships between civil society and the state and that



Guest speakers (seated, l to r): Marian Harkin, Anna Lee and Brian Harvey

PHOTO: A MEAGHER

non-governmental organisations are still not fully accepted in Ireland.

Anna Lee pointed out that not-for-profit-organisations and groups need to find ways to replace or complement their increasing reliance on contractual approaches with ways of working that are built on shared knowledge and approaches with the potential to build trust and effective inter-organisational work.

This theme of the need for greater networking and engagement between community and voluntary organisations was reiterated during a general discussion at the end of the conference.

Conference proceedings and the results of the UCC research will be circulated to community and voluntary groups and organisations in early 2016.

For more info, email: CPower@ucc.ie or c.forde@ucc.ie.

Stark findings as landscape changes

Research is ongoing "into the impacts on community development practice resulting from austerity, competitive tendering and local government alignment in the Irish State".

UCC researchers surveyed 349 community organisations and, while one might argue that those with most concerns would be more inclined to take part, the team are also conducting qualitative interviews. The full report is due for completion in early 2016.

The research was conducted by Féilim Ó hAdhmaill, Déirdre O'Byrne and Catherine Forde and covers 2008 to 2015.

During that period, there have been €19billion in public spending cuts and €11billion in tax increases.

In surveying community organisations, the researchers said it is "important to note the historically high dependency on the voluntary and community sector in the Irish State to provide welfare services".

The survey found that:

- 77% of respondents believed their work priorities were "greatly influenced" by their funders' priorities,
- 74% felt there was "a 'fear factor' influencing how people within the community sector react to alignment".
- 63% saying that "funding criteria prevent (their) organisation from engaging in work that it

wished to pursue".

- 72% said alignment had reduced their organisation's autonomy (24% reported no change).
- 64% felt that the impact of alignment on community development practice had been negative while 10% said it had been positive.

Overall, regarding community development, more than 80% felt that both the task - "the achievement of social change linked to equality and social justice" - (85%) and the process - "the application of the principles of participation, empowerment and collective decision making" - (84%) had been altered due to alignment.

As one respondent saw it, "The principle of locating Local and Community Development within Local Administration is not in itself a bad thing. However, the 'culture' of Local Government continues to be top down, remote from disadvantaged groups and individuals and very hierarchical".

In further findings:

- 80% were concerned over potential job losses.
- 72% were concerned with the amount of time spent engaging in the tendering process.
- 69% felt public tendering for contracts had negatively impacted on community development.
- 58% felt that public tendering had a negative impact on relations between community groups.

The researchers pointed out that:

- Austerity not only led to increased need but decreased services and supports to deal with need.
- The Community and Voluntary sector experienced disproportionately high cuts. eg A study in 2013 found there were annual cuts to the sector of between 8% and 10% from 2008.

However, it is not just 'austerity' that is impacting on the community and voluntary sector, the researchers state: "In conjunction with an austerity agenda there has also been a policy of increasing local and central Government control over the operation, funding and work of the voluntary and community sector."

It references in particular the Local Government Reform Act 2014 and 'Putting People First' (2012) policy that introduced the policy of alignment linked to public procurement and competitive tendering.

The researchers reported that, "competition, commercialisation and privatisation are increasingly becoming central to the sector in Ireland". We are following Britain in this regard.

In our next edition, we will feature Brian Harvey's views, as presented in Cork and elsewhere, on local and community development in Ireland today.