

Issue 58 - Nov-Autumn 2017

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CHANGING IRELAND

Issue 57 - COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT - COLLECTIVE ACTION - EMPOWERMENT - SOCIAL INCLUSION - www.changingireland.ie

"I'm a big believer in Community"



Singer, Social Activist and Ploughing Champ

Mary Coughlan



ISSN 1610-5585



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'Changing Ireland' is an independent not-for-profit publication.

ABOUT US

'Changing Ireland' engages in original journalism to highlight the impact of local and community development and social inclusion work across Ireland. We report on action on the ground and provide a space for reflection on what serves people and communities best.

The magazine was established in 2001, is based in Moyross, Limerick, and is core-funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

This year, we began to produce journalism to reflect social inclusion work funded or supported by an array of Government departments and agencies. At the same time, we provide space for those with empty pockets and nothing but community development in their hearts.

We are dedicated to promoting social justice, equality and fair play and to giving people who are rarely heard a voice.

While covering serious issues, we hope our style of journalism provides encouragement to workers, activists and volunteers nationwide, including civil and public servants and all involved in social inclusion in Ireland today. See page 6 for information about the team behind 'Changing Ireland'.

SUPPORT

'Changing Ireland' generates a small amount of social enterprise revenue. It is core-funded by Government since 2001, receiving support from the:



Department of Rural and
Community Development



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Tuaithe agus Pobail

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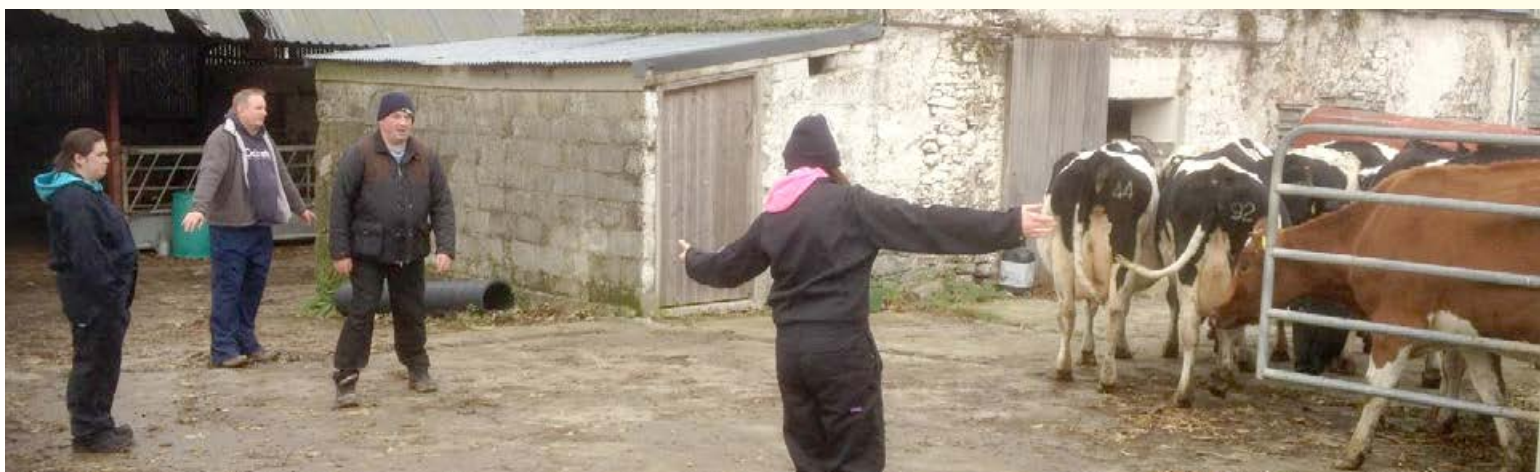
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Mary gets 5 stars for activism

Mary Coughlan has been described as Ireland's greatest female vocalist and has been compared to Billie Holiday, Edith Piaf and Elvis Presley.

She is also someone who has sided with communities and taken the lead advocating with them and on their behalf and she has done so with local communities and with minority communities, in particular women.

She has produced over ten albums over 25 years, singing beautifully, hauntingly and defiantly. She also walks the walk off-stage - she sides with the oppressed and makes a mark.

Most recently, she walked out of the Newstalk's studios in protest against George Hook's rape remarks and "increasingly right-wing policies" at the male-dominated station (which she said prevented management from taking immediate action).

Her protest helped propel the misogynist presenter out the door. "I did it for women everywhere, and men," she said afterwards.

In a quieter vein, she recently opened the country's first Women's Shed, modelled on the phenomenally successful Men's Sheds found nationwide, in Ennis, Co. Clare.

She has taken part in candlelit vigils outside the Dáil. For decades, she has stood in solidarity with Magdalene Laundry survivors and their families.

She's been to the fore of the 'Repeal the 8th' campaign, speaking about her own experience of making that lonely journey to London for an abortion.

Of course, she's a legend in her native Galway. Local lore tells of a sunny day in the 1970s when she stood up to the clergy on the street, or to be more accurate on Salthill promenade. Mary was allegedly approached by a priest sent down to chastise women sunbathing in two-piece bathing suits, aka bikinis. The priest said to her, "Young lady, the bishop does not approve of two-piece bathing suits," to which she is said to have replied "Well, which piece does he want me to remove then?" With that, he beat a hasty retreat with his useless collar and she probably called him every name under the sun as he departed.

A mother and grandmother, Mary has helped people by talking publicly about her experience with addiction, abuse, violence and other hardships.

She is also - as everyone knows - a bit of craic. As 'Changing Ireland' approached, she was singing "Did You Ever Get A Ride On A Tractor?" into the ear of a smiling RTE producer.

She'd just stepped down from her first ever ride in an actual tractor, having ploughed the best furrow of the day of a half-dozen celebrities at the 2017 Ploughing Championships.

There's no doubt Mary will keep singing, keep protesting and keep doing it for the community.

- AM

MARY COUGHLAN

"I'm a big believer" - Singer talks about her

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

"Community is the basis from which all culture should start," Mary Coughlan tells 'Changing Ireland'.

The singer, social activist, hero to many and pain in the neck to a powerful few, addressed the importance of community in our lives and of being involved.

"I'm a big believer in community and in community work and I know a lot of people working in community," she said.

Recently, Mary protested against George Hook over his comments on rape that saw him taken off the air. She played a key part in the public protests by walking out of a programme live on air, disgusted with what she and many others saw as the promotion of rape culture.

"I've been campaigning on social justice issues since I started singing," she said. "I had a platform and I used it. And yes, others don't use their platforms, but I do, campaigning for women mostly."

"I campaigned in 1979-1980 for the Galway Family Clinic. All we were doing was handing out information. And, I've worked for and on behalf of the Magdalene Laundry Women."

She sang in the 1990s about the Magdalene Laundries, while many in authority were doing their best to keep the lid on things.

"Right now, we're doing a lot of work on Repeal the 8th," she said.

Asked for examples of community

development projects she admires, Mary chose two.

"There's a great group of women in Dublin - they work with alcoholics and operate from a sitting room on every street in North County Dublin. The project is called 'Áit Linn' and it's addressing alcoholism within the community. It's really cool. I've paid them a couple of visits in recent times," she said.

Some years ago, in the USA, Mary was very taken by a project she came across that was set up by former nuns in America - a project very similar as it happens to one in Newport, Co. Tipperary (previously highlighted in 'Changing Ireland').

"They started to work in the

community with kids. They found a warehouse. They got cars that had been totalled and got a mechanic to teach the kids how to rebuild car engines, panel beat them and

er in community work” social activism

spray them. Their motto is ‘Think Local, Act Global’ and I’ve thought of that all my life. It’s the way to go.”

As an example of her advice to people to “Make a mark locally, care for your community and the people living in it”, she said she loves where she lives on the Small Sugarloaf, in County Wicklow, adding with a smile: “At the moment, we’re trying to stop them building a road across the Sugarloaf Mountain.”

That road may never get built.

“Community is the basis from which all culture should start..”

*W: www.aitlinn.ie

You don't need to be Mary to have a voice



You don't need to be Mary to have a voice

Mary Coughlan makes plenty use of her voice, not just for singing, but also as an activist. She has spoken up for women especially. When others were unable, or afraid to do so, she told her own stories and directed people's attention towards injustices.

Journalist Ben Panter does something similar in this edition. In two of his articles, he tells a little of his own experiences which bolster his reports. Part of our role

is to give a voice to those on the margins. Their experience counts and it's hard to be much more on the margins than being a single parent in a rural area, without transport, while job-hunting (with a degree), on low income and subject to sanctions. If complaints are low - yet we hear that Ben's experience reflects true challenges - one wonders why people are not availing of the formal complaints process.

We all want to hear from people on the margins - a place nobody likes to be for long - so that the views of those experiencing social exclusion feeds into policy-making.

In this edition, we have a strong rural focus. We report on €800,000 this year going into social farming, a proven support for people on the margins.

We also look at two towns in Kerry and Mayo taking the lead on community heating systems - an example to the rest of us - and not just

environmentally sound, but economically clever of those communities too.

Throughout Ireland, independent community-based companies with voluntary boards run over a thousand local rural transport routes. However, many people hadn't heard of them. Now, the locally-run services have a national name, 'Local Link' which was launched recently by the Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring.

His new Department received a welcome increase in its budget for 2018. In this edition, we look at its functions and meet some of its personnel. Hopes are high that communities both urban and rural will now receive more support. Generally, the new department - it is unusual to have one set up mid-way through a government's term in office - has received a warm welcome from people active in the Community and Voluntary Sector.

Just look at what can come out of a community! Take the volunteers leading a project in County Clare that is seeking to bring about an end to the world's waste of single-use cups. Millions of cups go to landfill annually and, shamefully, Ireland is currently ranked as the worst performing country in Europe in relation to action on climate change.

While we need to look more to communities for leads like this, it is good to hear the Minister Ring intends to harry his cabinet colleagues to ensure 'rural' and 'community' are taken into account in decisions they make.

It behoves the rest of us to also speak up for those experiencing marginalisation and to help them be heard.

There's only one Mary Coughlan, but we all have a voice.

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:

Established in 2001, 'Changing Ireland' is a national magazine focused on community development and social inclusion. It is managed and published by Changing Ireland Community Media CLG., through funding from the Department of Rural & Community Development.

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

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B: changingireland.blogspot.ie

Y: youtube.com/changingireland

L: linkedin.com/company/changing-ireland

Also: Issuu.com

Production:

Editor: Allen Meagher

Editorial Team: Viv Sadd, Juan Carlos Azzopardi, Joe Saunders, Rosie Smyth and Allen Meagher.

Packing and Distribution: Speedpak, Dublin, an award-winning social enterprise.

Printed by: Davis Printers, Limerick.

Voluntary Board of Directors: Claire Gallery (chair), George Clancy (vice), Seamus McGiff (sec), Andrew O'Byrne, Cathy Jones, Ellen Duffy, Jude Meaney, Kay Flanagan, Viv Sadd.

Thanks To . . .

'Changing Ireland' thanks everyone involved in the production of Issue 58.

**MADE IN MOYROSS
LIMERICK**

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 CLG, or the Department of Rural & Community Development.



What have you missed?

ONLINE GAMES CONFERENCE

Unique **FREE** event in Cahir, Nov 23rd.

Wondering how to enhance the skills of young people and youth workers in a digital & multi-media context.

Look no further. A free conference titled 'Games to Inspire' is about to shake things up. It should appeal in particular to games designers, social activists, youth workers and development educators.

It will include workshops on: 'Gamification' in youth work, social inclusion and economic justice; how games can mobilise people regarding the Sustainable Development Goals. It will also highlight the power of virtual reality and multiplayer online games to promote human rights and empathy towards refugees.

The line-up of speakers includes Professor William Gamson, who has been using games in his campaigning since the Vietnam-war protests in the 1960s and Mary Flanagan, a feminist games designer who leads the movement for the creation of 'Games for Social Change'.

Participating organisations include, Blizzard Entertainment, Trocaire, Youth Work Ireland Tipperary, Romero Games and LIT. There's a mix!

The conference will take place on Thursday, November 23rd, in Cahir Castle and will be followed on November 24th by a day of workshops for young people. Book early, on the website, as places are limited.

W: www.virtualyouthwork.com



Cahir Castle in Co. Tipperary is the unique venue for the 'Games to Inspire' conference

FAMILY LEARNING CONFERENCE: NOV 29, DUBLIN

Organised by NALA

NALA is holding their annual 'Family Learning Conference' on November 29th at the Ashling Hotel, near Heuston Station, Dublin.

The 2017 conference will focus on:

- Projects and/or programmes where adults and children are working together on education or literacy.

- The links between education or training settings and the community.

- How to link culture and literacies (reading, writing and oral language) at home and in school. This will look at projects that take where people are at, in their communities, their homes and their schools and look at the literacy that people use in these settings.

Conference fee from €30 to €60. Full details on www.nala.ie – click on 'Upcoming Events'.

WORLD COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT 2018

Conference being hosted by Community Work Ireland

Yet another conference, but this time a biggie. Ireland didn't win the bid for the Rugby World Cup, but the World Community Development Conference, held in New Zealand this year, comes to Ireland next year, specifically to NUI Maynooth from June 24th – 27th.

The conference, organisers say, "offers a unique opportunity for practitioners, participants, academics, policy makers, funders and other stakeholders to share perspectives on current contexts and challenges for community work."

The full attendance fee is €400 per person.

W: www.wcdc2018.ie

Also: www.communityworkireland.ie

SICAP 2018 – 2022 TENDER RESULTS

Community groups await outcome

The next iteration of the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) will launch nationwide on January 1st.

SICAP 2018 – 2022 will continue to focus on reducing poverty and promoting social inclusion and equality in Ireland through supporting communities and individuals using community development approaches, engagement and collaboration.

The Department of Rural and Community Development said it "has undertaken a number of measures which will assist in strengthening the next iteration of the Programme in response to national needs."

As we went to print, companies that responded to the call for tenders were awaiting results, due on Nov. 24th.

Community workers currently employed through funding under SICAP were on tenderhooks awaiting the outcome.



Family Resource Centres welcome increase, but are fully stretched

Dear Editor,

The National Forum for Family Resource Centres (FRCs) welcomes the increased funding allocation to Tusla in their work with children and families, and the announcement of new 11 FRCs to join our programme.

However, the lack of increased core operational funding for the current 109 FRCs, to continue our important work with families and communities, leaves our programme in an uncertain and vulnerable position where we question our future sustainability.

FRCs are currently stretched to the limit financially and many cannot meet their overheads. We have taken on extra work since the establishment of Tusla, with no extra funding. Our centres are fully stretched attempting to meet the current needs of the children and families in our communities.

While we welcome the opportunity for extra funding of €10,000 per centre, this does not take into consideration the impact of the ongoing cuts on our staff, volunteers and our communities since 2007. It takes no account of the sustainability pressures or needs of the individual projects, with our funding frozen at 2008 levels and an additional 15% reduction in 2011-2013.

There is no further capacity in our FRCs for extra work, without the restoration of funding and a substantial investment in both human resources and overheads. An equally worrying development is a lack of clarity on whether this funding is coming nationally, as part of core-funding to FRCs.

The allocation of €1.76 million for an additional 11 projects suggests a funding model of €160k per annum per project which is realistic. However, none of the current 109 Centres are in receipt of this level of funding; indeed over 64 projects currently receive less than €100k per project.

If €160k is recognised by Tusla as the real cost of an FRC, then a budget allocation of in excess of €4 million would be required to bring the current projects up to €160k each before any new project was added, as outlined in our pre-budget submission.

Yours Sincerely,
Mary McGrath,
Acting Chair, National Forum of
Family Resource Centres

INSPIRE THE NATION! Best practice in

LOCAL - GLOBAL

“Single use cups are so I Let’s do this people.”

- A simple way to engage in environment

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

Róisín Ní Gháirbhith, local community activist, and Marie Georget, owner of ‘Oh-La-La’ creperie, in Ennistymon, Co. Clare, have launched a campaign to convince tea and coffee drinkers to quit using throwaway cups.

To encourage people, Róisín and Marie convinced local café owners to offer a discount to customers who bring their own cups. Today, customers in the small West Clare town get 30 cents off each cuppa, making coffee-drinking there the best value in the country.

To further encourage behavioral change, Róisín and friends designed beautiful, bamboo-based, re-usable coffee cups. They cost a tanner each and can be purchased from local cafes or online (see below).

Interest in the discount scheme from further afield and orders for the cups have delighted - and almost overwhelmed - the project organisers, who until now have worked as volunteers.

SOMETHING HAD TO GIVE

“We need to make and use less unnecessary stuff, if we are in any way serious about the demands we are putting on the planet,” said Róisín.

The so-called “disposable” single-use cups found nationwide are utterly unrecyclable, made as they are from a multiplicity of materials fused to retain hot contents.

However, many people haven’t thought about it, or believe corporate propaganda about the cups being recyclable.

WHY IT MATTERS

“A single-use cup can take up to 500 years to break down in the environment and about half-a-million cups are binned every day in Ireland,” said Róisín.

“In Ireland alone, we’re talking about two hundred million cups annually.

Imagine how much space they take up in landfills; just look at how much space they take up in our bins,” she added.

Single-use cups, it can safely be said, are one of the best examples of our society’s shameful daily disregard for the environment and the world future generations will face.

CELEBRITY BACKING

Musicians, politicians and celebrities seem to be almost queuing up to plug the community-based initiative. However, that may also be a reflection of the hard work the volunteers are putting into promoting the project. And it’s hard not to ‘Love Your Cup’.

Steve Wall, singer, formerly of popular band The Stunning, is enthusiastic: “It’s re-usable, dishwasher-safe and beautiful. I love my cup. No more un-recyclable waxed paper/plastic cups for me.”

And, we can assure readers that bribery is not part of the Ennistymon folk’s promotion plan. I had to pay full price along with everyone else for my re-usable cup. I went for a grey design. Very popular among men, I was informed.

LOCAL - GLOBAL

As the idea spreads, just as a good local lead can influence the national, so too this idea could have an international influence. People in other countries are also looking at taking on the consumerist culture of the coffee giants.

At present, globally, it is estimated that over 55 million throwaway cups are discarded daily. Many never make it to landfill - ending up as litter on streets, in streams and rivers, and ultimately in the ocean.

BAMBOO CUPS

The Ennistymon initiative sells stylish, organic bamboo cups with six designs to choose from.

“People that buy them love them,” said Marie. “and our goal is for every city, town and village across Ireland to adopt the ‘Love Your Cup’ project.”



community settings

last year!

al activism

*"If you're a
coffee addict you
could save enough to go
on a week's holidays
to Clare of course!"*

said Róisín.



Róisín Ni Gháirbhith and Marie Georget outside 'Oh-La-La' creperie in Ennistymon, Co. Clare. Photo by: AM.

Róisín urged anybody, project, business or government department that would like to bring 'Love Your Cup' to your area, to "get in touch with us and we'll show you how we did it. Single-use cups are so last year. Let's do this, people!"

SAVE MONEY

Businesses and cafes can sell the cups at a profit - or gift them to employees - while selling their teas and coffees at a discounted rate to customers.

And while the environmental benefits should be clear, there is an added incentive for business owners, in that replacing single-use cups will reduce the amount of waste their businesses generate and the costs associated with waste.

As the 'Love Your Cup' people also point out, for anyone who likes a daily cuppa, with a discount of 30c per cup, they'll save over €100 a year.

That's a decent saving for customers.



Sharon Shannon (who is three-handed) likes the idea a lot.



Steve Wall is loving his cup.



Eamon Ryan went blue too.

To find out more, or to make contact with those behind the project:

W: <http://www.loveyourcup.org>

F: <https://www.facebook.com/loveyourcup/>

E: info@loveyourcup.org.

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Horace's Diary

TIME TO HEAD TO THE PUB!

'Changing Ireland' gave me a choice this year to go to one or other of the two traditional options that farmers have, when the harvest is in - to Lisdoonvarna to find a wife, or to the Ploughing to find farm machinery. Luckily, they sent me ploughing. Lisdoon's a let-down. The lady I met there last year wanted to move in with me and applied for a job as a post-mistress in my local post office. Unfortunately, closures meant they wouldn't letter. Crestfallen, she packed her bags and left. It took me months to tractor down.

Everyone seems to be trying something new. My cousin Shirley the social worker is changing career - she's going to be a bartender. It came about suddenly after she got fed up last Tuesday over how big her caseload is. She abandoned her desk and went to the local for a few vodkas. The barman looked a happy chap, which bugged her, so she asked him, "Tell me! What's the difference between your job and mine?" The bartender replied, "Okay! So, you're a social worker yeah. Well, let me guess. You went to college for six years, paid thousands of euro, did loads of exams and went through poverty to get your qualification. Now, you sit



with people for session after session, using technique after technique, but you still don't know if they're telling you the truth, never mind telling you everything. They often leave your office sobbing." He continued: "I went to bartender school for 10 weeks and I learned to mix a little of this with a little of that. At work, I only have to wait an hour or so - sometimes no time at all - and I have people telling me everything, their innermost thoughts, love stories, finances, health problems, trouble with the law, the lot. They go home happy." She starts in the same pub next week, behind the counter.

She'd only broken the news to me when I bumped into a community development

worker I know.

He asked me, "What time is it?"

I replied, "Sorry, I haven't a clue, I have no watch."

"Never mind!" he said. "The main thing is that I consulted you and we discussed it."

Time to go to the pub myself.

ABOUT HORACE:

A former civil servant, community worker and agony uncle, Horace knows it all.

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

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



MOVIE REVIEW

BALLYMUN - THE 4TH ACT



BY CATHERINE CORCORAN*

The film 'The 4th Act' examines regeneration, memory and loss in the Dublin suburb of Ballymun. It draws on a rich local archive of video footage, compiled over the decades from the early 1960s, when the original masterplan for high-rise Ballymun was designed, up to the time of the regeneration process in the early 2000s.

It is the story of clashing perspectives and how the powerful can impose their vision and ideas on poor communities, often without the permission of local people.

The film shows that during the 1990s, there seems to have been a consensus that 'something had to be done about Ballymun'. This was interpreted by Dublin Corporation as the physical regeneration of the area, with the assumption that new buildings would constitute a new community. The Corporation went for the very drastic option of demolition of all of the high rise flats and replacement with new, individual houses – a bricks and mortar approach.

This was part of an attempt to reorganise the community more in line with a 'normal' Irish community, to bring in new investment, new people and to dramatically reshape the area. A number of important issues emerge here.

The first is the clashing agenda between powerful, official Ireland and the residents of the area. The official view, portrayed throughout the film, was that Ballymun had failed and that much of this failure was due to the social composition of the area.

Local people, despite deprivation, poverty and unemployment, highlighted the positive

The film raises major questions about what 'consultation' and indeed what 'regeneration' means.

aspects of community life; there was a shared history often created in defiance of state agencies who consistently neglected Ballymun. According to the film, local residents wanted to remain in Ballymun, but with better living conditions, keeping positive aspects such as community solidarity and organisation alive. State agencies wanted to rebrand and recreate Ballymun and to normalise it by introducing more private housing, shopping facilities and owner occupation.

The film includes a plethora of outside experts, officials, artists and business people projecting their version of Ballymun onto the regeneration process. One artist commissioned to create an installation there stated that he would measure success when Starbucks opens there as that is what all young people want- to recreate Ballymun as café society!

But what about the people's wishes?

The film raises major questions about what 'consultation' and indeed what 'regeneration' means. From the film, it is clear that vital decisions had already been taken before the residents were asked for their opinions, despite rhetoric about local participation in the regeneration process.

An evaluation of the so-called consultation process questioned whether a new form of privatised housing was the best option; another said that consultation process was tokenistic, eroded trust and ended up breaking a collective voice. This is not unusual.

International evidence would suggest that estate regeneration programmes should avoid an excessive focus on the physical aspects to the neglect of services and social supports. A good diagnosis of what is actually needed to support local people and to meet felt needs is vital rather than an assumption that a capital-led building programme will solve the problems.

Who tells the story? The 4th Act is good in recalling the story of the area in the past. One major flaw is that we did not hear what local people themselves think about regeneration now that they have been rehoused:

Are they happy?

What has happened since to the people whose area has changed so drastically?

A review of this from the people's perspective is badly needed if we are to truly learn from the Ballymun story.

Meanwhile, I recommend you get to a screening of 'The 4th Act' when it shows at a venue near you.

*** Catherine Corcoran is a lecturer and community development practitioner attached to the Limerick Institute of Technology.**

W: <http://www.the4thact.ie/#video>

WHEEL CONFERENCE 2017

Too many charities? Not quite! - Goal & Oxfam couldn't marry their differences



Deirdre Garvey speaking while Charlie Bird takes it all in.



Seamus Boland and Ivan Cooper.

Given the thousands of groups, including charities, in the Community and Voluntary Sector, it is easy from a distance to think there should be fewer of them.

Merger seem to make sense and Goal and Oxfam Ireland held talks earlier this year to discuss just that. To outsiders, it looked like the perfect marriage, but when introduced they discovered they were incompatible. After five months of talks, both sides called it off.

On the question of whether or not there are too many charities, or not-for-profit organisations, "We can easily find ourselves playing into the hands of those who just see it as a massively inefficient way of doing anything."

So warned Ivan Cooper, The Wheel's director of public policy, speaking at his organisation's annual conference.

He was part of a panel looking at the Government's plan to formulate a strategy for supporting the Sector.

For his part, Seamus Boland, CEO of Irish Rural Link, pointed to the value of new organisations emerging all the time, saying: "There will always be NGOs and charities and there will always be too many of them (meaning in a good way)."

He paid credit to Alone, Age Action and the Irish Senior Citizens Parliament as just three examples of tremendous organisations that evolved out of the "natural growth of the Community and Voluntary Sector".

He did, however, say, "You could argue there is a need to rationalize, that there is a real case for more collaboration".

Speaking as a former chairperson of The Wheel - he asked for it "to facilitate much more collaborative efforts."

Clodagh McDonnell, principal officer with the Department of Rural and Community Development, said: "There's no doubt about the work being done on the ground and the need for that."

However, the governance

responsibilities and the need to be in compliance with the companies and charities legislation was at times "disproportionate relative to the amount of funding" that many small organisations received from the State.

"It is definitely my view that there is a need for mergers, for greater alignment, shared services, to release the front-line workers from the burden of administration and governance work," she said.

Previously, she was involved in introducing integration. "We integrated over a hundred Community Development Projects with Local Development Companies, for governance reasons primarily, to make them stronger."

"Now, a lot of them - having come through that process and out the other side, six or seven years later - would say that it actually worked. They got to do the work they loved doing and were good at."

She said there is still "a need for tidying up (to) let frontline workers do what they have to do - on the frontline where they're badly needed."

Rounding off the discussion, Deirdre Garvey, CEO of The Wheel, said, "I have yet to read evidence that can really say that a large bureaucracy delivers better outcomes for people than a variety of small, flexible, close-to-the-community initiatives."

She said this was a "proud to work in a sector where there are thousands of organisations. Some of them wouldn't even recognise state funding if it hit them on the head."

"Please don't misunderstand my words - I am not saying that there isn't a really important place for collaboration, mergers, shared services and efficiencies. But there is a different debate about effectiveness," she added.

- Allen Meagher.

1st National Charity Impact Awards

The "best of Ireland's nonprofit sector" will be celebrated on December 13th, at the Wheel's National Charity Impact Awards (formerly the Our Better Together Awards).

The aim is to increase awareness of the significance and role of the nonprofit sector in Irish society and to highlight best practice.

"We have an ambition that everyone in Ireland - the public, the media, the private and public sectors, and policymakers - understands, appreciates and supports the community, voluntary and charity sector, and what it is that happens in it," said Wheel CEO Deirdre Garvey.

VENUE:

CHQ building, 1 Custom House Quay.

ENTRY: Free.

BOOKING: online, via www.wheel.ie



DEPARTMENT GETS TO WORK WITH 12% MORE IN BUDGET



Minister Michael Ring dug deep and threw a shovel-load of sand in the air, shouting, "Here's one for Mayo!" The crowd roared and the Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, a Dubliner, smiled broadly. The pair took part in the photo-opp to promote the new Department of Rural and Community Development at the Ploughing Championships, held in September, in Co. Offaly.

PHOTO: A Meagher.

The total budget allocation to the Department of Rural and Community Development for 2018 is €228m, marking an increase of 12%.

Budget - Key Points:

- €35 million to the LEADER programme.
- Funding for the Town and Village Renewal Scheme is up €3m to €15m.
- The Outdoor Recreation Scheme to receive increase of nearly €4m to almost €11.4m.
- €10 million has been allocated to Local Improvement Schemes (roads).
- Funding for the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme increased from €42.2m to €43.2m.
- €46.2 million to the Community Services Programme.
- An increase of €2.9 million to the Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (PEACE IV 2014-2020), bringing its total to €3.7 million.

In a public statement, Minister Ring described the monies allocated as "an opportunity to create more vibrant, inclusive communities and support people and families who live in rural Ireland".

He particularly welcomed the fact that, "There will be a total of €35 million available for projects under the LEADER programme in 2018".

He also highlighted an increase "for the hugely popular Town and Village Renewal Scheme by €3 million to €15 million (which) will benefit hundreds of rural communities around the country."

Meanwhile, the €10 million allocated to Local Improvement Schemes will "provide help improve small private roads, laneways and boreens which don't come under the control of local authorities and which give access to homes, farmyards, agricultural land and business premises."

He described the €43.2m Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme as "the largest social inclusion intervention of its kind in the State".

It was pointed out that the Department received the second highest percentage increase in the budget to any government department.

* See page 17 for more.



So, what's new about the Department?

The Department of Rural and Community Development was at the Ploughing Championships 2017. Both the community section (see below) and the rural section (see next page) were represented at stalls where workers and volunteers took questions from the public.

Community

Burial Regulations

Communities Facilities Scheme

Dog Control

Framework Policy for Local and Community Development in Ireland (2015)

Community Policy

Public Libraries

Public Participation Networks

SICAP

Seniors Alert Scheme

Scheme to Support National Organisations (2016-2019)

Volunteering



Department of Rural and Community Development



An Roinn Forbartha Tuaithe agus Pobail



Helen Howes, co-ordinator of the Public Participation Network in Co. Wicklow, has the ear of two government ministers here - Michael Ring and Heather Humphreys. On Helen's left is Claire O'Rourke of Cork County PPN.



L to R: Catriona Hillard, Community Section of Offaly County Council, Cllr Eddie Fitzpatrick, Rosie Smyth (Dept), Lisa Keaveney (Dept) Cllr. Declan Harvey and Emma Rourke (Pobal). Find out more about the 'Offaly Passport' here: <http://www.visitoffaly.ie/Offaly-Passport>.



Rosie Smyth, Minister Michael Ring and Bairbre Nic Aongusa, Assistant Secretary of the Community Division, at the SICAP stall, in the Department of Rural and Community Development's tent, at the Ploughing Championships.



Having the craic at the Ploughing 2017.



WHAT DO YOU READ? Talking books while keeping out of the rain. At the Libraries stall in the Department of Rural and Community Development's tent.



Leave No Trace when engaging in rural recreation!



Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Heather Humphreys, with cabinet colleague Minister Michael Ring.



Bernie Reape and Leon Fox at the LCDC stall in the Department of Rural and Community Development's tent.



"My puppy now!" insists Karen McGowan. Inside the Department of Rural and Community Development's tent at the Ploughing.



'Leave No Trace!' might sound like the latest murder mystery on Netflix, but it's actually about leaving the country as you find it or better when outdoors. Catherine Burns and Siobhan Gill who work together in the Department of Rural and Community Development, pictured with Deirdre Kennedy, Rural Recreation Officer for Sligo-Leitrim.

Rural & Community Development

“I’ll be making every Minister accountable” - Minister Ring

INTERVIEW BY ALLEN MEAGHER

Some new TDs make their Sown way to the Dail - Stephen Donnelly famously got lost - but Michael Ring was accompanied by 130 party supporters on the Tuesday he took his seat, on June 13, 1995.

After Ring won in a by-election that media pundits had someone else pegged to take, his supporters were determined to make some noise in Dublin. His campaign slogan had been ‘Give the Dail a Ring’ and, indeed, a bell rang out from the supporters gallery as he entered.

I was there that day with the ‘Mayo News’.

In time, Ring became a media magnet, as a TD, and later as a junior minister, and made a name for himself as one of the most prominent TDs to speak on rural and community issues.

But at the end of that first day, he was hoarse. Too much talking and singing.

I don’t know was he singing in June, but after a wait of 23 years and a day since he first took his seat, Michael was appointed Minister for Rural and Community Development.

Meeting the Westport man again recently, I found him as accommodating, sharp and full of energy and enthusiasm as ever.

Asked about his vision and what he hoped to achieve as minister, while expressing “delight” that the Taoiseach had appointed him, he said, “What it really means now is that community and rural development is at the cabinet table.”

“My job as Minister is to make sure that every other Minister is accountable in relation to what is happening in rural Ireland. I’ll be making every Minister accountable particularly in any legislation so that it is pro-rural. I think it sends out a very strong signal that we are serious about rural Ireland.

“I’m delighted that we have the community aspect in my department, it’s very important and it’s all interlinked.

“Community is important to me, because it is important in my role as Minister to make sure that the way the economy is now recovering is spread to every part of the country.

Asked would he have any particular message for ‘Changing Ireland’s audience, including people volunteering or working for the last few years, in difficult times, in communities, the Minister replied:

“The country and the

economy have been through a very difficult time. We have probably had the worst recession since the foundation of the State and I want - first of all - to thank the community workers and the volunteers, on my own behalf, on behalf of the Government and on behalf of the people of Ireland.

“People don’t realise the kind of work, effort and commitment that volunteers put in and I know it has been difficult for them.

“It has been difficult for Government and, of course, we had to make decisions that have affected everyone and everybody’s lives. But, now the recovery is beginning to happen.

“And we hope that the recovery will spread throughout rural and urban Ireland, because people have suffered in both urban and rural. It’s my job as Minister to make sure that recovery is spread throughout the regions.”

Asked about the pressure to produce results for communities, he said:

“Look at it since we came into office and I’m only in office a number of months. Since then, we have set up the Rural Recreation Scheme. The town and village scheme is up and running and, in the past year,

we have opened up the CLÁR programme.

He referred also to other schemes, saying that “a lot of work has been done in a very short time.”

He said that the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) is “such an important scheme - it supported 47,511 people last year and we are hoping to have SICAP 2018-2022 up and running in January.”

Given that his tenure could be short, if an election is called, he remarked, “All I can do is work day-by-day, week-by-week, month-by-month. I have no magic wand to know how long we are going to be in government.”

“But, as long as I’m Minister, and as long as I’m in Government, I am going to be working for the communities, I will be working for Ireland and I’ll be working for ‘Ireland PLC’ and that is all I can do.”

Asked about Moyross, where this magazine is based, and which features in the top tier of areas deemed to be “deprived”, he showed that he was more than familiar with the area and was very conscious of urban disadvantaged areas. He spoke the “major regeneration scheme ongoing in Moyross” and he had been to Moyross.

He spoke about the “major regeneration scheme in Moyross” and he had been to visit the area and met residents.

“There has been lots of Government money invested (in urban disadvantaged areas). In fact, in my own department, we signed off money again (recently) from the Dormant Accounts to make sure that areas like that, the deprived areas, are given every opportunity.”

He was clear about his role as a minister for rural and urban Ireland.

“I’m a Minister for the Government and I represent everybody in Ireland,” he said.



Croagh Patrick as seen from Westport, Co. Mayo, Minister Ring’s hometown.

Department's RURAL focus

The Department of Rural and Community Development's remit extends beyond Community (page 14) and Rural Development (see below) to include other areas such as the Charities Regulator, RAPID and Dormant Accounts.

Rural

Rural Development

Action Plan for Rural Development

(including the Atlantic Economic Corridor)

LEADER

The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme

CLÁR

Town & Village Renewal Scheme

The Walks Scheme

Western Development Commission

National Broadband Plan

Tidy Towns

Dormant Accounts

Social Enterprise

RAPID

Charities Regulator

Irish Water Safety

NOT ENOUGH IN BUDGET 2018 FOR COMMUNITIES, SAYS OPPOSITION

Opposition party figures have called for more functions to be transferred to the new Department of Rural and Community Development and called for it to receive more funding.

Despite a funding increase of €19million for the Department, the opposition has continued to highlight that it is the department that receives the least funding of all government departments.

It received a 12% increase - departments on average received a 3% increase in Budget 2018.

Éamon Ó Cuív pointed out he had more functions and a budget of €400m when he was Minister

Despite the increase - a notable positive after years of spending freezes and cuts - both Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin figures continued to label it "the 'Cinderella' department".

Fianna Fáil TD, Robert Troy, said, "If this Government is serious about rural issues, it must hand over power to the Minister



CRITICAL: Fianna Fáil's Robert Troy.

for Rural and Community Development for general rural functions."

He called on the Taoiseach "to establish a more substantial Department and transfer responsibility for a range of additional schemes, including the Rural Social Scheme, the Farm Assist Scheme and the Tús and CE schemes."

In regard to funding, as Troy's colleague Éamon Ó Cuív has pointed out, he had more functions and a budget of €400m when he was Minister for Community, Rural

and Gaeltacht Affairs.

"It's the 'Cinderella Department' in terms of budget and functions," he claimed.

Meanwhile, the Sinn Féin TD, Peadar



CRITICAL: Peadar Tóibín of Sinn Féin.

Tóibín, criticised "the government decision to take €10 million from LEADER funding to support the Local Improvement Scheme", a case he said of "robbing Peter to pay Paul".

Defending that decision, Minister Ring said, "The transfer of funding from LEADER does not, in any way, reduce the Government's commitment to provide €250 million to LEADER over the duration of the programme."

It certainly cannot be said that the Minister is shy about spending money.

"I love money and I love spending it," he told reporters on being appointed a minister, back in June.

Recent media reports claimed that the Minister spoke up again at the cabinet meeting that preceded the announcement of Budget 2018 and registered some frustration.

Whether he did or not, there are signs of movement.

In terms of extra functions for the Department, the Community Services Programme (CSP) has now been incorporated into the Department's remit. The CSP has a budget of €46.2 million.

It currently supports 425 community companies and co-operatives "in communities where services are lacking or where demands not being met by existing services".

CSP-supported businesses also serve a significant purpose in creating employment for people from disadvantaged groups.

* (See page 13 for the budget's key points).

- Allen Meagher.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Labre Park residents celebrate 50

- Site in Ballyfermot, Dublin, was first place in Ireland to provide Traveller

CIAN MATTHEW KEARNS REPORTS from BALLYFERMOT*

This year, the residents of Labre Park celebrate the 50th anniversary of their community, while plans are afoot to perhaps finally deliver the type of accommodation and facilities the residents most desire.

Built in 1967, Labre Park was the first Traveller-specific accommodation in Ireland and consisted of 39 concrete 'tigin's alongside which Traveller families could park their caravans (many pulled then by horses). Each tigin was fitted with a living room and a stove, a place to wash and a toilet.

Initially, there was optimism surrounding the opening of the Park, with one American sociologist calling it "the most human and sensitive project of its kind". An Irish Times report in 1967 referred to Labre Park as "a luxury camping site".

However, photographs from the time show that was not the case, with children playing beside giant rubbish tips.

The plan was criticised, even at the time, as an attempt to assimilate Travellers into the settled way of life.

Today, most of the original families remain and, at an event during the summer, over a hundred people visited the centre at Familibase, in Ballyfermot, Dublin, to mark the 50th with poetry readings, singing, craft displays and a display of photographs from Labre Park's five decades.

The event was organised by Ballyfermot Travellers Action Project (BTAP) in association with Traveller Pride Week, and the photographs, in particular, drew a constant crowd. Visitors marvelled at the vibrant and unique culture on display, finally



The new tigin's in Labre Park in 1968. The site was named after the patron saint of Travellers, St. Benedict Joseph Labre (1748-1783). Source: Dublin City Council Photographic Collection.

officially recognised this year by the State. Others laughed and pointed out familiar faces, family and friends, both recent and past.

Lorraine McMahon, co-ordinator of BTAP, says that while, "It's a very tightknit community... It's a community that the system has failed for the last fifty years."

Currently, of 179 residents, 54 are under 12 years of age, and accommodation needs are forecast to grow. Residents have long campaigned for better facilities,

including stables and a track for horses.

Lorraine pointed out that out of 47 families, 25 are waiting on permanent accommodation, some for nearly two decades. Three families have no water, no sanitation and no electricity.

She said, "Traveller-safe, culturally-appropriate accommodation has not been delivered. We have now been part of four Traveller accommodation programmes and they have all failed."

Breda Berry, one of the founding members of BTAP, has seen it all unfold as a resident of the Park over 30 years. She remains optimistic about BTAP's ability to "make the community's voice stronger" and to "empower people to stand up for themselves and their own rights", but she has seen standards in the Park decline. She pointed to poor management and anti-social behaviour, but said the exacerbating factor is simply that, as the families in Labre Park grew, "there has never been a response to the new needs."



The panel discussed how to build on the government's recognition of Traveller ethnicity.



Maureen Ward displays t-shirts she makes to commemorate special events. The model wagon is a replica of the one she was born in. she was aged 72.

years in "luxury camping spot"

r-specific accommodation



Margaret Anne O'Brien (right) received the award for Outstanding Contribution to Labre Park Community for her tireless fundraising work. She has raised money for charities across Ireland and as far as Ethiopia, as reported on by 'Changing Ireland' previously (Issue 33, Summer 2010, p24).

There is good news on the horizon. Clúid Housing Association now has a lead role in Labre Park's development and plans are afoot to add new, suitable accommodation and facilities.

Lorraine said many residents, however, are skeptical. "The community lost a sense of hope and a sense of belief that anything was ever going to improve. And with that feeling of hopelessness and powerlessness, people feel there's nothing we can do."

That is why the day the diggers come into Labre Park will be "a

great day of celebration for the community, because that's when the redevelopment will get real. This is not just a bricks and mortar project; this is about rebuilding the social fabric and confidence of the community."

The event held to mark the 50th was part of that re-building work.

In Familibase's auditorium, seven local residents had their contributions to community life recognised on the day and Traveller activist and scholar Sindy Joyce gave an impassioned talk on the importance of Traveller Pride

Awards, which take place annually across the country.

She also paid tribute to a group of women from Labre Park who performed poetry earlier this year at the National Concert Hall, following visits by artist Glen Hansard and others to encourage residents to tell their story (as part of Dublin's "Culture Connects" Programme).

One of the key messages from '50th' event was that - much as they would like to - Labre Park residents cannot do it all on their own; wider society must also play a role. And that

requires acceptance and engagement.

Comments - some perhaps valid - on social media suggest that more needs to be done in that regard, in improving wider community relations and in combating hate and other crime.

PHOTO CREDIT: All photos (bar the B&W) are by Cian Matthew Kearns for 'Changing Ireland'.

* Additional background reporting by A Meagher.



Breda Berry with her youngest son Matthew. Breda was one of the founding members of BTAP and has lived in Labre Park for over 30 years.

Labre Park - Traveller Pride Award Winners

At the 50th celebrations, seven Labre Park residents were recognised for their outstanding contribution to the community, in the following categories:

- Margaret Wall – Outstanding Contribution to Labre Park.
- Celine O'Connors – Community Engagement.
- Michael Berry – Sports Person of the Year.
- Margaret Anne O'Brien – Fundraising.
- Dominic Berry – Arts & Culture.
- Paddy Flynn – Education
- Elizabeth Berry – Music



Lorraine McMahon (left) receiving a bouquet to thank her for years of hard work as the BTAP co-ordinator.



Dominic Berry won the Arts and Culture Award.



REACHING THE HARD-TO-REACH

Kilkenny's solution to Ireland

- But not everyone is

INTRODUCTION

If you're wondering what the solution is to rural transport problems in Ireland, there are people who believe they absolutely have the answer. As 'Changing Ireland' pointed out almost a decade ago, it's not rocket science (see cover). In the meantime, transport has improved, although countries such as Denmark and Belgium still leave us standing.

A transport conference in Kilkenny over the summer heard from leading lights abroad who took a revolutionary approach to the issue. Their ideas could work in Ireland too, if only our citizens were guaranteed 'transport rights'.

Here, we take a look at how the conference went and reporter Ben Panter also tells from personal experience how hard it is to live today in rural areas when you are reliant on public transport. - Ed.



BY BEN PANTER

It had been a long hard winter. After a brief stint on Jobseekers Benefit, I was looking for work. However, the rising cost of car insurance had put me off the road and public transport can kindly be described as intermittent in North Clare.

Without a car I could not find the work needed to earn the income to get back on the road and through this catch 22 my seven-year-old son and I hitched through the wind and the rain while I tried to explain to him why people with empty seats would not stop for a child in a school uniform.

Eventually I managed to get the money together for an old Ford



Declan Rice, CEO of Kilkenny LEADER Partnership and iRoute conference organiser, with Joe Saunders of the Irish Local Development Network, Martina Early of Roscommon LEADER Partnership and Eamonn O'Reilly of NEWKD.

Focus. Just in time, as various opportunities fell my way. I rang up several brokers who - due to my profession, five penalty points and the age of my car - could not find me a quote.

"When is this going to end, the costs are killing us." I moaned to one broker, Catherine. "You are forcing people to drive without insurance."

"It's people driving uninsured that are forcing up the costs," she explained, seemingly oblivious to the irony in her statement.

"I'm legally allowed to drive and you won't insure me! Who's causing the problem?"

Outside of the Pale, things are reaching crisis point. Government initiatives to get people back to work are rather pointless, if people cannot actually get to work.



Meanwhile, in Kilkenny, the attendees were told that a bottom-up, national movement is now needed to get the Irish State to recognise the rights of citizens to access to transport. A policy framework must be developed to outline the level of guaranteed provision for citizens. Put simply, without such a framework, access to transport will continue to be inadequate and skewed away from the areas and groups that need it most.

These were the key messages that emerged from the 'iRoute' integrated transport event held in Kilkenny during the summer and everyone who should be there was there. The iRoute event brought together transport providers, regulators, international experts, practitioners, academics, and community interest groups to explore better transport options for Irish citizens.

It was organised by Kilkenny LEADER Partnership, Kilkenny County Council, Ring a Link, and Carlow Kilkenny Energy Agency.

Declan Rice, CEO of Kilkenny LEADER Partnership, explained the rationale behind the conference.

"During the consultation phase for the LEADER programme in Kilkenny, broadband was, understandably, a key theme. In fact, access, mobility and transport were all raised as not only affecting the quality of peoples' lives but as actually affecting the course of their lives," said Declan.

I was just as worried about the impact it would have on my son's future outcomes. A talented GAA player, he was missing out on training and I wondered if he would catch up with his peers after missing a year? Would he miss another season? Would the County miss out in years to come?

Whilst the initial focus of the conference was on transport in Kilkenny city and county, it quickly became obvious to all attendees that the theme and needs were not just local, nor national, but global. Delegates heard of the legal requirement of the Flemish Government, in Belgium, to provide baseline 'mobility' and 'accessibility' standards to citizens. It means that transport providers must design their systems accordingly. One often hears in Ireland of transport services that should connect up through clever timetabling, but don't.

Delegates were also informed of the 'Vientiane Declaration' on

and's transport dilemma getting to hurl just yet



*Every example quoted was innovative
as well as citizen-focussed.*

Sustainable Rural Transport. The Vientiane Declaration is a good-will, voluntary and legally non-binding document. But it is important because it was signed, in March, by representatives of countries with a combined population of 2.8 billion people, over one-third of the planet's population.

A striking aspect of the conference was the degree of consensus amongst policy-makers, local authorities, private sector and not-for-profit representatives. They all agreed on the need for a policy framework to enshrine the rights of all citizens to adequate transport on an inclusive basis.

A constant message was: 'People do not choose to use transport. They want to do something else, but they need to use transport to do it'.

For myself, that was true. I do not enjoy the costs associated with motoring and if I had access to good public transport I would go without on environmental grounds. But, without a car, I would be condemned to unemployment for another winter.

Other European countries seemed to be working towards solutions. Attendees were given Danish and Belgian examples of community-based systems, of public-private link-ups and various funding and organisational models. Every example quoted was innovative as well as citizen-focussed.

In one Danish example, private providers were assigned varying fees for car-trips, depending on the social benefit of the trip and/or the need of the user. So, if the passenger was an older, less mobile person going to a hospital appointment, the fee paid by the commissioning agent reflected the time needed to walk the person to and from the car at each end of the journey.

By the close of the conference, there was a common vision on the evolution of thought and behaviours that we must see in this country, if we are to design an integrated public transport system (not just for Kilkenny, but for the country).

As Declan Rice summarised: "Together, we created a picture of what an integrated transport system would look like here in Ireland. We agreed that to realise that vision, iRoute would need to move from being a conference to becoming a national movement for policy change."

He said that iRoute could and should "kickstart a pilot for integrated transport here in Kilkenny that could be rolled out nationally."

Many ideas were put forward at the conference as to next steps and the organisers are reflecting on how to progress these, focusing on the potential for national impact.

Finally, for those glad to hear of progress, we are back on the road and I'm back working. Now all I have to worry about is remembering to bring his hurley and shinguards.

To find out more about the conference that hopes to start a movement, or to get directly involved, visit: www.iroute.cklp.ie/



iroute
INTEGRATED RURAL URBAN TRANSPORT EVOLUTION

Public Transport in Ireland

Local Link is new name for - Here's why there are 1,300 bus routes in Ireland that you've probably

Quipping that it was his first time making a speech "with my wellingtons on", cred Michael Ring launched the rebranded rural transport network - now known nationwide as 'Local Link' - at the National Ploughing Championships, on September 20th.

The national service reaches people who would otherwise effectively be marooned in their rural homes and it has been running for over 10 years. However, it operated under many disparate names and "didn't have much of a name" overall, as the Minister noted, until now.

Following consolidation, there are now 17 Local Link offices nationwide. In 2015, they replaced the 35 rural community transport groups that had provided the service.

Launching Local Link, the Minister said the service adds to the "quality of life" that people have: "It gives them the opportunity to leave their home, be brought shopping, to local events, public events, to social occasions. It helps to stop the isolation we have in rural Ireland. It gives people a new outlook."

He said Local Link was also about providing transport for people to be able to get to work, saying these are the kind of services "that we need in rural Ireland."

"It's brilliant to see that we have 1,300 routes nationally. That in itself sends out a very strong message. And, last year alone, over 1.7million journeys took place. That's a credit."

He repeated the figure for emphasis.

Those outcomes and statistics helped to protect the rural transport network scheme from the cuts that followed the country's economic crash some years ago.

The 2017 budget to support Local Links services is €16m, which helps - among other things - to supplement the cost that users pay for the service.

To cover people entitled to free travel on public transport, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection invested €1.5m in the programme this year.

Recognising the collaboration that makes the



Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring, at the launch.

programme a winning one, the Minister said: "Sometimes there's a bit of a divide between statutory bodies and local communities, but it's great when they work together and co-operate

"We don't thank the volunteers enough, yet the value of these schemes to communities is unbelievable."

to put something together like this."

"One of the actions we wanted to take, when earlier this year we launched our 'Action Plan for Rural Development', was to connect people to communities, to address isolation."

One of the statistics he recommended in particular to the media in attendance was the following:

"In Sligo-Leitrim alone, there's a local link

that brings 500 people to HSE appointments.

"And 57 people there travel three days a week for dialysis - that a great credit to this scheme. Doesn't that show that this scheme is actually working?"

He reminded his audience that, in his new role as Minister, he will be working very closely with communities nationwide.

He said there wasn't enough appreciation for the "work, effort and commitment that communities put into schemes."

"We don't thank the volunteers enough, yet the value of these schemes to communities is unbelievable."

"I want to say to everyone involved in this scheme, particularly the community sector and the volunteers - the people that man the phones, that work behind the scenes, in every corner of this country - 'Thank you for what you do'."

Volunteers and staff from Offaly-Laois Local Link helped to organise to the launch.

THE UNSUNG HERO OF OUR PUBLIC TRANSPORT

"Local Link is in many ways the unsung hero of our public transport system. In launching the Local Link brand, we want to make sure people all over Ireland are aware that these fantastic local bus services exist, and that the work being done at local level is properly acknowledged.

"The message is also that Local Link is very much open for business for everybody, including people going to work, families, students, tourists and visitors.

"The service only works well because of the people who are involved. They do the driving, they're behind desks, taking phone calls, dealing with all of the issues needed to support it. NTA thanks them for their hard work and professionalism."

- **Tim Gaston, director of Public Transport Services at the National Transport Authority.**



Local Link depends on local people providing local services.



rural transport service

never heard of, until now!

He called on people present to “give volunteers a big round of applause for the work they’re doing”. Which they did.

He encouraged people to “keep up the good work, keep using the scheme and spread the word about this scheme because it’s working very well.”

“It helps people connect with others, with society, to live normally like everybody else, and not to be isolated because of where they live.”

Hoping it goes from “Strength to strength”, he said, “I’d like to see this happening in every corner of rural Ireland.”

Minister Ring gave the new ‘Local Links’ service the most resounding vote of confidence imaginable and if he ever wanted a career outside politics, Ryanair could do much worse than call on Michael Ring to relaunch their transport brand.

At present, at least you’d be sure to get there with ‘Local Links’.

Note: ‘Local Links’ is managed through the National Transport Authority, under the auspices of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

‘Changing Ireland’ has produced a short movie from the full launch which you can watch here: <http://bit.ly/LocalLinkRing>

Further background information is available here: <http://bit.ly/LocLinkPrs>



NOW IS THE TIME TO BE BRAVER

Alan Kerry works with Kildare-South Dublin ‘Local Links’ network

“Since 2002, we have delivered rural transport, but now we need to be braver,” he said.

He welcomed the new national branding of rural transport and said, “We now need to ask how do we deliver comprehensive transport in rural Ireland.”

“One day a week services are very commendable, but think of people who need to connect on a daily basis for employment. We need high-frequency, scheduled services, provided by accessible vehicles,” he said.

“The majority of the Local Link offices are physically housed in local authorities. They are still run by community directorships and community boards. I think local transport planning should be considered from within a local authority structure. It gives you access to planners and others making decisions,” said Alan.

He believes, “We are moving closer and closer to the delivery of services based on identified need” and he hopes this will replace the more ad-hoc approach where a local politician or community representative calls for a service in their area.



Tipperary volunteers Annie and Eileen Heaphy at the launch of the rebranded rural transport network now known nationwide as ‘Local Links’.

SUPERB ONLINE INFO, EXCEPT...

The 17 Local Links branches each have their own website, many with route maps and news updates on their services. The sites are really easy to use.

The only downside apparent in the rebranding was that some of the maps excluded a rather important part of Ireland, introducing a coastline along the border.

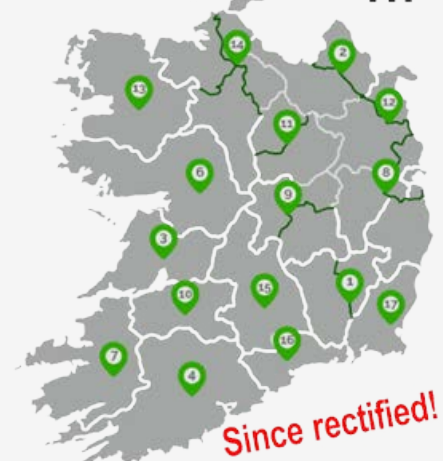
The exclusion of the same part of Ireland recently from a national map used by Met Eireann - as shown on RTE’s *Late Late Show* - caused consternation.

The Local Links oversight showed up in maps used by at least three branch office websites.

Following notification, the National Transport Authority informs us that it has now instructed branches to link to a full map of Ireland.

To find out about Local Link services throughout the country, visit: locallink.ie

OFFICIAL LOCAL LINKS MAP
EXCLUDED IMPORTANT PART
OF IRELAND





SOCIAL FARMING: The Resurgence ADVICE TO ACT NOW WHILE

BY BEN PANTER AND ALLEN MEAGHER

This year, over €800,000 is being spent to support social farming, including funding to create a national social farming network to help people at risk of social exclusion. The funding comes from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine*.

Leitrim Development Company, which previously helped to run a cross-border social farming programme, was awarded €400,000 to help roll out the national project. It has teamed up with three more community organisations - South East Waterford Leader Partnership, West Limerick Resources and South West Mayo Development Company.

In collaboration with UCD, Leitrim received a further €113,000 to establish a project that would highlight best practice in social farming.

Meanwhile, South Kerry Development Partnership (SKDP) received €140,000 to create a Social Farming Model Project. Other beneficiaries include the Cork branch of Down Syndrome Ireland, which received €137,000 for its horticulture centre.

As agriculture Minister Michael Creed pointed out, when launching the initiatives earlier this year, social farming allows people the opportunity to participate in farming activities in their local area.

"I know that working on farming and horticulture projects has helped many

participants to improve their wellbeing and grow their confidence. For participating farm families, social farming has proved a very worthwhile and satisfying activity which contributes to the local community," he said.

Up to now, participants have mostly consisted of people who receive support or treatment from the health services.

Matthew McGreehan, a Louth farmer who volunteered a decade ago as part of the first pilot project here - it operated with EU support in counties north and south of the border - met with 'Changing Ireland' at the recent ploughing championships.

Currently the chair of Louth IFA's Rural Development Committee, he said that he and others involved in the first social farming pilot were greatly disappointed when it ended and hoped they would be called upon again.

He explained how it worked.

"Leitrim development company matched me up, they liaised with the services and they matched me up with three people who attend the Rehab centre in Dundalk. They came to my farm one day a week for forty weeks. They basically just joined in on the day-to-day work on the farm. They got involved with the community as well."

The pilot scheme helped, for instance, to pay some of the costs involved in making the farms safer for people to visit.

Notwithstanding the latest announcement of investment, he said, "It's a real shame that more is not being done to help these people. You know it gives them a real sense of purpose just getting up in the mornings."

His eagerness is evident as he calls on the HSE and others to "grasp" this opportunity.

"I had people with intellectual disabilities. I enjoyed it and they enjoyed it. It's about the sense of purpose it gives people. Even if it's only opening a gate, or closing up the door of the trailer, it counts. Other farmers had people with mental health issues and that would be something that I would like to do."

"I know Malachy Dolan, one of the farmers in Fermanagh had people with mental health issues and they came on in leaps and bounds, you know, it really transformed their lives," he said.

Malachy and his wife Miriam, along with their three children (ranging in age from 10 to 14) farm 50-hectares in South-West Fermanagh and the social farming experience was new to them.

Their children were quite young at the time and "nervous" about strangers coming to the farm, but the entire family soon adapted.

"We found it gave a very good grounding for our children," Malachy said.

Participants in that earlier scheme explained - on film - how they viewed the social farming experience at the time.



At the launch of the Kerry Social Farming Evaluation Report, Minister Michael Creed, enjoying a joke with Kerry Social Farming participants Brendan O'Sullivan and Bronagh Enright. Also pictured are Joseph McCrohan, manager of South Kerry Development Partnership, and George Kelly, chairperson of Kerry Social Farming Committee.

SOCIAL FARMING HAS BACKING



Social farmer, Matthew McGreehan.

"I enjoy what I am doing, because I'm an outdoors person more than an indoors person," said Darren. "I want to be where the action is and helping people out."

English born **Daniel** had the pleasure of working on Larry Masterson's Blissberry Farm in County Donegal.*

He said, "When I was sixteen, I was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia and obsessive compulsive disorder. I had moved over here to Ireland and I was given this opportunity. I was skeptical, but I thought I would give it a go."

"There are other things in my life that have really changed since the farming, things like going to the cinema - I wasn't able to do that. The other week, I went and sat through the whole film and it's little things like that which help," he said.

Dubliner **John**, diagnosed with PTSD, told Minister Creed that he had lost five stone in weight and halved his medication since volunteering.

A recent report published by academics from Mary Immaculate College in Limerick adds weight to the anecdotes.

Dr Brendan O'Keefe has been studying the area for some years, particularly looking at social farming in South Kerry where a scheme was rolled out back in 2013. He said, "The model adopted in Kerry works particularly well, because it has been tailored and adapted for local conditions."

He listed "the key factors leading to its success" as including:

- the openness of host families,
- the bottom-up approach adopted by the South Kerry Development Partnership,



Participant Daniel pointed out that "a lot of people turn their heads when they find out about my illness". By comparison, social farming hosts Larry Masterson and his family "respected me as a person. They let me into their home. They gave me an opportunity."

- funding from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine,
- and the scheme's person-centred approach.

Up in Leitrim, the pilot scheme has ended, but farmers like McGreehan are keen to see the project rolled out again, this time on a permanent basis.

"We all know that social farming works. The studies have all been done and the research is all out there and what we need now is the HSE, Rehab and all those with people in their care, to actually bring people out to the farms and to support the farmers."

"We are not looking to benefit from peoples disabilities, but it does cost money to have people on your farm. It's not for everyone I admit, but people can be easily matched up with farms."

He urged the HSE and others "to give them a chance".

Larry Masterson was Ireland's pioneering social farmer, until a recent health setback obliged him to take a step back (he is making a good recovery). He is hopeful for the future, but urges more farmers to embrace social farming now "while the funding is there" and to be ready to stick with it if the funding dries up.

We've a bit to go to catch up with other countries in Europe, but we're getting there.

FUNDING

* The investment of €804,825 comes through the CEDRA Rural Innovation and Development Fund.

LINKS

This short feature looks at social farming from the participants viewpoint: <http://bit.ly/socialfarmingSFAB>

To find out about the current scheme, contact Leitrim Development Company whose Social Farming Support Office.

T: 071 9641772 / 086 7905596.

E: helen@ldco.ie

W: <http://www.ldco.ie/social-farming.html>

NEXT EDITION

'Changing Ireland' interviewed Larry before and after his health setback. Look out for our coverage of this inspirational leader in our next edition.



Minister Ring gets the lowdown on social farming from Margaret Casey of South West Mayo Development Company.

PARTING COMPANY WITH - Potentially, I was a poster boy for

BY BEN PANTER

Jon was ecstatic – The Community Employment (CE) Scheme had offered him a role as a carer, enabling him to achieve his lifelong vocation, after a period of unemployment. Days later his tone had changed.

“Because I am with Turas Nua, I am not allowed to take the job,” he said.

I thought he was joking, but alas no. A place on a CE scheme is not a job.

Turas Nua is one of two companies that provide JobPath supports nationally and as the overseer of national policy for the scheme later told me:

“CE is not full-time sustainable employment, but it is a stepping stone back to work for those who have been out of the workforce for an extended period.”

Once ‘activated’ onto the JobPath scheme, the principle goes, employment prospects should improve, negating the need for such initiatives.

“You will have a personal advisor who will provide intensive individual support and assistance, to help you find a sustainable full-time job,” said Ann Monaghan,

If by intensive she meant three sessions spread over six weeks where you are asked the sort of questions a probation officer would ask – about addiction, debt and family dynamics – then she was right.

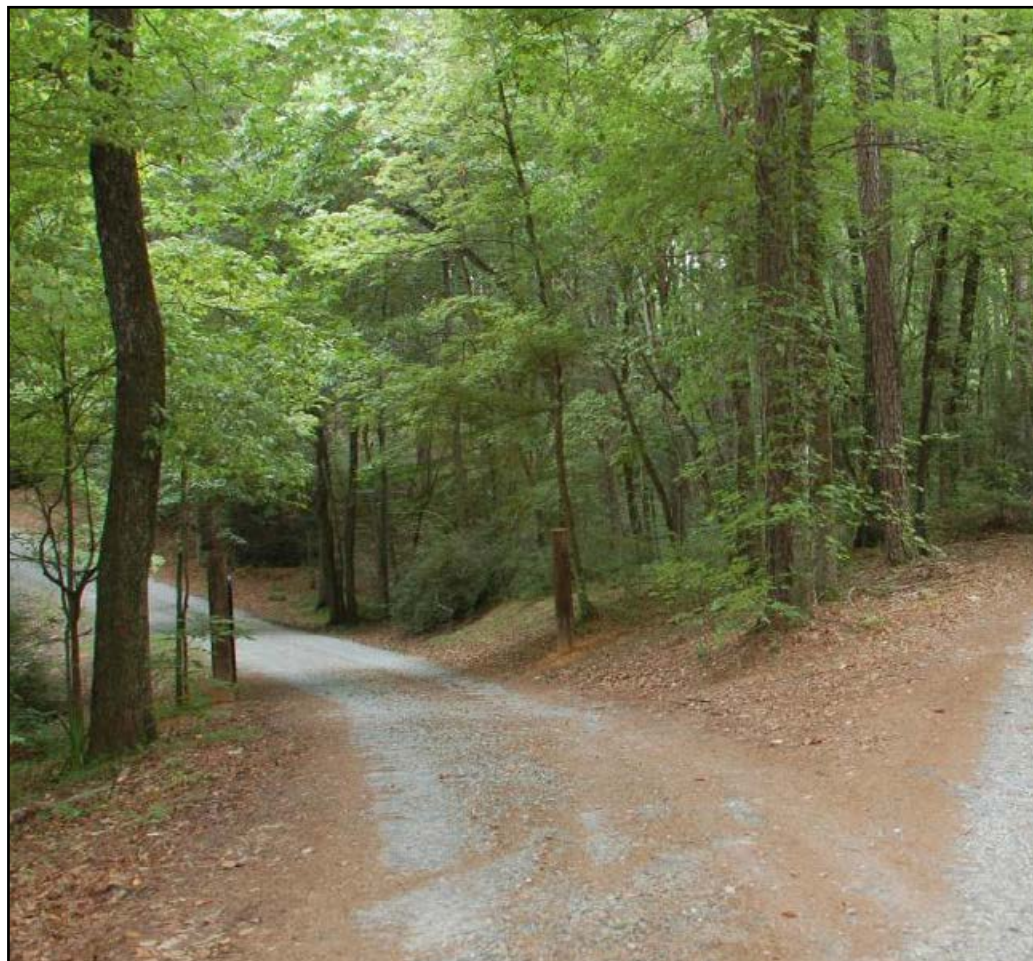
Unfortunately, the JobPath programme can actively hinder prospects. According to the DSP’s figures from their performance report of January 2017*, people unemployed for 1-2 years find themselves less likely to find work in their first year on JobPath.

When I asked about the troubling findings, I was told by an official, “It’s drawn from a very small sample size – the report qualifies that.”

Maybe? I was soon made rudely aware of how it might be the case.

At this stage, unaware of Jon’s and many other people’s experiences, I revised my C.V. and began trawling the websites for opportunities.

Two weeks later, I was called to Ennis to attend a meeting where I was guided through a questionnaire. It probes for details such as your family situation and any addiction or debt problems you might have. However, after an allotted 15 minutes, my time was up and I was re-booked in



for another meeting a fortnight later to complete the task that could have easily been completed online.

“It was no longer up for debate – the scheme tasked with getting me back to work was actively hurting me... I needed to get out of JobPath.”

The slow progress rankled. I was used to working efficiently with the bright young ranks of future journalists in the University of Limerick newsroom.

“Journalism,” I was advised by the then supervisor of the Ennis office, Roisin, “was

a niche career.”

“That’s alright, I’m flexible,” I replied, keeping the bright side up. Surely a shiny new degree would get me something?

A Jobsbridge internship (note – the scheme is now closed) in a local community radio station seemed the ideal chance to polish my broadcasting skills and the much maligned €50 (extra payment) would almost cover the transport up and down the coast of Clare.

“You won’t be able to apply,” the station manager told me bluntly. “People on JobPath cannot avail of the scheme, we had the same problem with our other (singular) candidate.”

Not one to be put off, I secured an interview for a job as a graphic designer with a multi-national in Shannon.

The application process had been challenging, involving phone screenings and online tests. This was a valuable

for a job?

TH TURAS NUA r their endeavours



opportunity. Taking “ownership” - to borrow from the list of HR buzzwords employed - I asked Turas Nua for a mock interview.

The appointment was made, but my advisor failed to show-up. Another day lost coming and going for nothing. I flunked the interview, I know that was on me, but still.

Winter was in full swing, I was living in a seasonal town with next to no transport and local employment was non-existent.

I needed transport, so I broadened my search for paid work, looking beyond journalism. Fortunately, I had a decade worth of experience driving heavy machinery on building sites and I heard of an opportunity in construction. The pay was good, I would soon be out of the mire on those wages. There was one barrier, the price of my safe-pass, manual handling and machine tickets totalled €450, a small investment that would be paid in weeks if I was on a salary, but on social welfare

would take months to save.

A phone call to O'Dwyers Safety Services in Limerick seemed to bring forth good news. “The government will fund your machine ticket if you have been claiming benefits (including Back to Education Allowance) for the last twelve months.” Which was true. “Unless you are on JobPath,” he added.

It was no longer up for debate – the scheme tasked with getting me back to work was actively hurting me. I was frustrated, confused and aware that depression was beginning to sink its claws into me.

To get back into the workforce I needed to get out of JobPath. I contacted Ann Monaghan in the DSP.

“We do not facilitate a customer to move from one activation support to another. This is for a number of reasons, one of which is to ensure that the customer derives the maximum benefit from the support they are with,” she said.

“What could I do?” I asked.

“If you do not find a full-time sustainable job at the end of your 52 weeks with JobPath, you will return to the Intreo activation service and CE remains an option which you can discuss with your Intreo Case Officer,” she replied.

In other words wait it out; a course that Jon had decided to take. “I told Turas Nua that I will do what they need me to do and no more.” A waste of his time, social welfare payments, and the resources funneled to HR ‘professionals’ in their light and airy offices.

Pleasantries aside, I furnished Roisin with my experiences, my findings and the work I had been doing behind the scenes, making sure to inform her of my correspondence with Ann. I finally got the promise of career advice and a mock interview - 26 weeks into the 52-week programme.

Potentially, I was a poster boy for their organisation. Someone who had committed to improving his career prospects and was flexible and keen to work. I will continue to do so, handicapped though I was in my attempts at a New Journey with Turas Nua.



RESPONSE

Since Ben began JobPath, and his enquiries, the DSP's name has changed to reflect a wider role and it is now the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP).

The DEASP were given an opportunity to respond to this article and provided the following information:

The most recent performance report on the JobPath service (published on the Department's website www.welfare.ie) indicates that 19% of Jobseekers who engaged with JobPath between July 2015 and March 2016 entered full time employment. This was 36% above the weighted reference performance rate of 14%.

To the 31st October 2017, of the approximately 129,000 clients who had commenced with the service 412 complaints have been made; this represents 0.32% of the total number who have engaged.

The Department commissioned a Customer Satisfaction Survey to be carried out at the end of 2016. The survey was conducted using a representative sample of 2,000 JobPath clients (1,000 from each provider).

The results of the survey indicated that jobseekers feel that they are receiving a good service, with 76% – 81% satisfaction vs 5% – 8% dissatisfaction; that the contractor's staff make them feel valued (90%+) and they have a good relationship with their personal adviser (90%+). They also feel that the service has improved their chances of getting a job (68% - 77%).

There is a robust complaints process and inspections regime in place for the oversight of the JobPath contracts. Should a customer feel they have received a less than satisfactory service; it is recommended that they engage with the complaints process provided.

During their time on JobPath, participants are encouraged and supported to take up employment related training, upskilling or other activities which could lead to a sustainable job in addition to assistance with the job application process.

If a person is successful in finding employment, the JobPath Company will provide in-work support to assist with the move back into employment.

(See also page 30)

VOLUNTEERS & STAFF FIELD QUESTIONS, ISSUE ADVICE & CALL FOR ACTION

The Ploughing Championships, held again in Offaly, is about much more than farming and for years civil society groups active in rural Ireland have made themselves known at the event.

While people went to the Aldi tent for free bread and country music, something more valuable was available from civil society groups - advice, support, information and opportunities to volunteer.

This year, a record attendance of 291,500 people strolled around the site. Some of the most interesting 'tents' to visit were those which on closer inspection revealed 40 to 50 organisations, government agencies and businesses inside.

Editor Allen Meagher (below on his tractor) went to see.



Positively buzzing with enthusiasm at the stall of the National Adult Literacy Agency: Mary Ward, Lee Mitchell, Jennifer Dowling and Liz Corkish.



After ten years, patience is running thin and activists Julie and Brian at the Inclusion Ireland stall collected hundreds of signatures calling on the Irish Government to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.



Sean McCarthy (with tray) is an holistic herbalist from Cork creating rural employment through his unique enterprise (green tea). While not a civil society group, he wins this year's 'Most Generous Stallholder' accolade from 'Changing Ireland'. Powerful tea, thanks! W: <http://naturespharm.com>



'Talk to us!', say friendly Samaritans volunteers.



Volunteer Jarlath Hughes stresses the importance of early diagnosis when there is too much iron in your blood. The Irish Haemochromatosis Association is there to help with its national network of volunteers.



'Generation Apprenticeship' is a Government-backed project that seeks to more than double the number of learners (aka job-seekers) taking the apprenticeship route in Ireland. **W:** apprenticeship.ie



Tusla staff at the 'Change a Life - Become a Foster Carer' stall.



An Irish Heart Foundation volunteer (on left) with a visitor.



Chefs at the Mke Nyumbani Kenyan Cuisine stall.



Minister of State, John Halligan, chats to personnel involved in the Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board.



A talented team from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission used art to link their work to the concerns people expressed.



(Cont'd from pages 26-27)

WHAT IS JOBPATH?

JobPath is described on www.welfare.ie as "an employment activation service provided to assist jobseekers on the live register to secure and sustain full-time paid employment or self-employment." The service is provided on behalf of the Department by two private companies Seetec and Turas Nua.

* A report on the scheme's performance, as referred to in the article, is available at: <http://bit.ly/JopPathPerfJAN17>

WHO GETS CALLED?

The Department selects jobseekers on a random basis for referral for a year to JobPath. The scheme is backed by sanctions for those who, without good cause, do not co-operate.

SUCCESS V CRITICISM

There is no doubting the Government's success in reducing unemployment, from a high of 15% five years ago to 6% today. Nonetheless, long-term unemployment remains high and the JobPath scheme - while well-meaning and despite the Government saying that the number of formal complaints is low - has drawn much criticism.

Opposition parties say JobPath makes it impossible for people to take up internships, or CE places, to the detriment of communities depending on CE-supported services.

Social Democrats TD Catherine Murphy has raised very serious complaints about the scheme in the Dail. Sinn Féin said JobPath sometimes makes it harder for unemployed people to find work and has published a document called 'JobPath Exposed'. Fianna Fail labour spokesperson Willie O'Dea has highlighted the intrusiveness of questions posed by Turas Nua.

Citizens have also challenged the demand on them to "comply and engage": <http://www.broadsheet.ie/tag/jobpath/>

BACKGROUND TO DEPT'S F.O.I. RESPONSE

Ben formally originally submitted his questions under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act to the Department. His questions were answered by Ann Monaghan, Assistant Principal Officer in Contracted Public Appointment Services - responsible for overseeing the operations of the JobPath service from a policy and contract perspective for the Department nationally.



Communities in Kerry, T

- Brexit fuels urgency of expanding

- People value the cost savings an

There is a new urgency to how we approach generating the energy we need, apart from concerns over climate change. Since Ireland imports 90% of its oil and gas from the UK, energy must be one of the Republic's top priorities when considering Brexit's impact. And communities are beginning to play a critical role.

The leader of free world may be in the Egyptian river* over climate change, but for those of us who actually care about children, several initiatives in Ireland are showing that communities can take matters into their own hands.

Often, when the country itself is slow to change direction, communities provide a lead and district heating systems are one way for communities to work together to reduce Ireland's carbon footprint. Costs also come down for members/households.

As far back as 2009 the pioneering eco-village of Cloughjordan in County Tipperary got the ball rolling as Davie Phillips, a spokesperson for the project, explained: "At the moment we have the largest community-owned district heating system in the country. Fifty-five houses here are currently heated this way although the system is designed to heat 130,"

"Wood-chippings from a saw mill in Ballinasloe - a by-product of fencing - are delivered into a single hopper machine and heated water is then fed into two kilometres of insulated pipes that power heat exchangers in individual houses.

"Each household's usage is measured, on top of a service charge that will go down as other homes come on stream.

"The funding came from an EU programme called Concerta (12 years ago)

and it funded the retro-fitting of homes in a 20km radius and covered 50% of the cost for us.

"District heating projects avoid the chaos of individual storage and delivering to each house. We share the costs, making heating more affordable, and we also have a focus on renewable energy."

"Our ecological footprint was measured by the University of Limerick and the Tipperary energy agency, this was a rigorous assessment which found that we had the lowest eco-footprint ever measured in Ireland."



Progress elsewhere has been slow, but as the wheels of the economy begin to turn other towns are following suit.

Ruth Buggie from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) admitted that the last district heating project in Ballymun

closed down when the flats were decommissioned. On the plus side, two towns in the West and South-West are following Cloughjordan's lead.

In January of last year, Kerry Sustainable Energy Co-op was registered, as part of the Transition Kerry project which aims to make Kerry 100% renewable by 2030.

Susan O Flaherty, a manager with energy consultancy firm XDC explained more about the Co op: "We are a community-based cooperative business which aims to encourage the creation of sustainable energy communities in towns

Kerry & Mayo set environmental lead

g district heating in towns & villages

and lower carbon footprint

BY BEN PANTER

and villages throughout Kerry. One of our main aims is to reduce the use of fossil fuel and promote education about energy efficiency and local renewable energy.

Studies undertaken by the consultancy firm show that Tralee is ideal for this type of community-led heating, potentially attracting a 90% share of the towns heating market.

"So far, our main activities have been retrofitting houses, bulk buying local wood

"It's difficult at this stage to work out an overall cost saving, but it will pay itself back in a short space of time and there will certainly be a cost reduction for the end-user."

and bulk buying efficient stoves and solar PV (panels)," she said.

"The co-op's initial focus is on investigating the potential for district heating to service a neighbourhood with a mix of private and public housing, as a means to tackle fuel poverty and improve well-being for the residents.

"Having completed a survey of heat demand in the neighbourhood and the potential for thermal retrofit measures, the co-op's members are now engaging with large heat users in the wider community to identify large anchor loads which would underpin the deployment of a town-scale district heating system."

Meanwhile, in nearby Killorglin, there are plans to supply 10% of the towns heating needs through district heating.

"We are working closely with the council...plans will be integrated with the Kerry County Development Plan and its Renewable Energy Strategy," said XDC.

Claremorris in County Mayo is also tak-

ing early steps in its bid to combat climate change and save the community money. The chairperson of the Claremorris energy Co-op (CEP) JP Prendergast told 'Changing Ireland': "Progress is underway and we hope to be up and running by next year."

"Currently we have thirty people on board and we expect that to grow to fifty and to also include local businesses."

"The challenge is to make sure we have done the groundwork and have something to offer the wider community, business' and the council."

"It's a leap of faith. Groups can be reluctant to work with the council and end up taking a passive approach, but we bring value to the table and we have something to offer.

"We are wary of bigger players coming in and taking ownership of energy needs from the community when, really, it should be us who address climate change.

"It's difficult at this stage to work out an overall cost saving, but it will pay itself back in a short space of time and there will certainly be a cost reduction for the end-user."



MORE INFO:

On Kerry: <http://www.transitionkerry.org/kerry-renewable-energy-co-operative/> <https://xdconsulting.eu> <http://ksec.ie>

On Claremorris: https://www.facebook.com/Claremorris-and-Western-District-Energy-Co-Op-631552026992842/posts/?ref=page_internal



National Adult Literacy Agency

Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

Family Learning Conference

- Nov. 29, Dublin -

NALA is hosting a family learning conference on Wednesday, November 29th, in The Ashling Hotel, Dublin.

The theme of the conference is fresh approaches to family learning.

In the morning, there will be a range of speakers discussing topics such as:

- ✓ play therapy,
- ✓ the impact of family learning,
- ✓ supporting families to access speech and language therapy,
- ✓ and creating your own picture book.

In the afternoon, there is a choice of six workshops, on topics such as how lego can be used as a family learning tool and internet safety for kids.



Registration and full programme details are available through the NALA website www.nala.ie – click on ‘Upcoming Events’.

Registration fee is €60, or €30 if you are a NALA member.

Hope to see you there!