

# CHANGING IRELAND

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT - COLLECTIVE ACTION - EMPOWERMENT - SOCIAL INCLUSION - [www.changingireland.ie](http://www.changingireland.ie)

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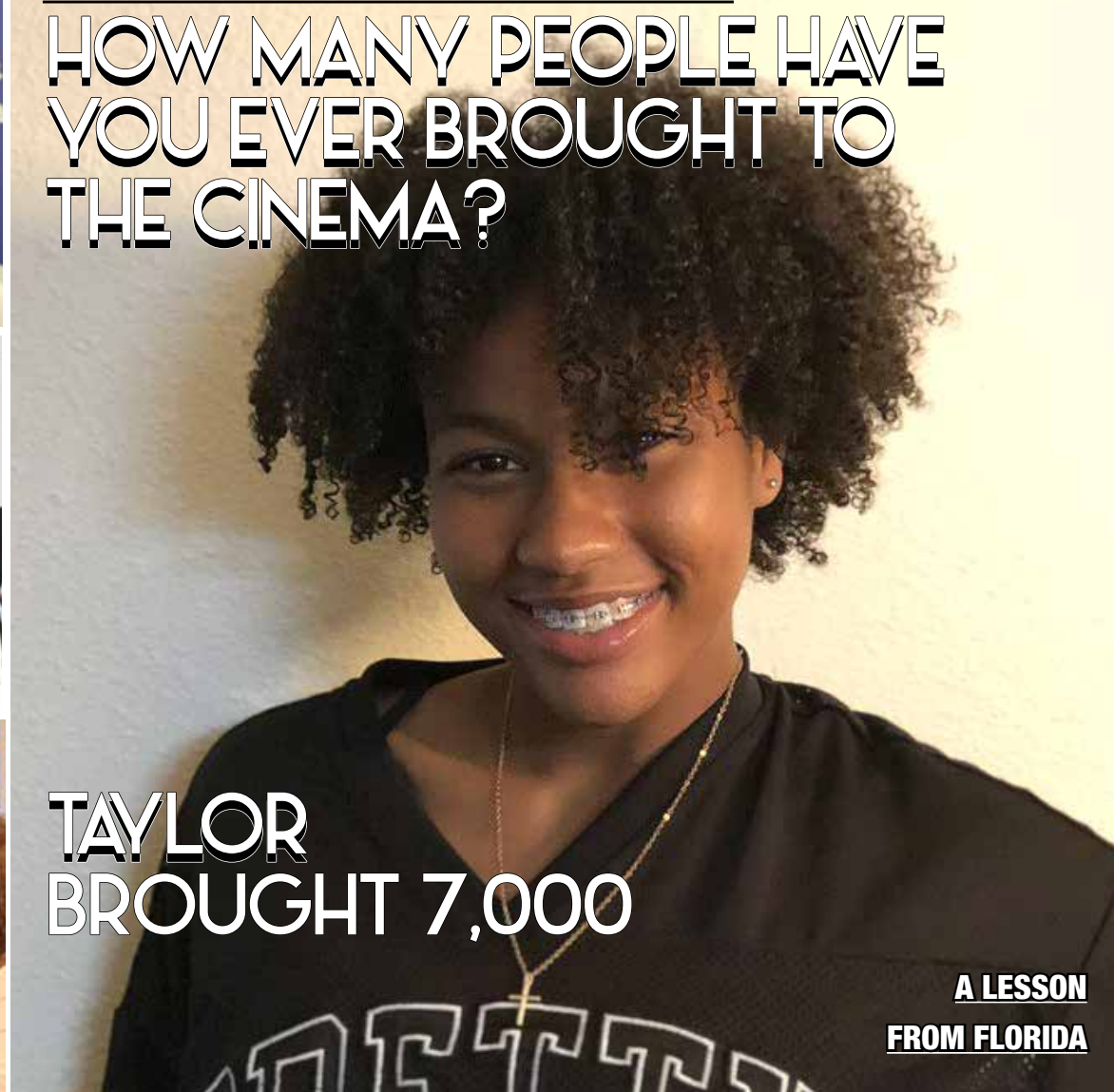


**FIND FUNDS FAST!**



**TEENS LEADING COMMUNITIES**

**HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE  
YOU EVER BROUGHT TO  
THE CINEMA?**



**A LESSON  
FROM FLORIDA**

**AH DO, HAVE A CUPPA!  
- SOCIAL FARMING IN CO. MONAGHAN**



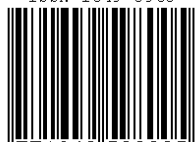
**CAN YOU DO IT YET?**

**IRISH TEENS  
EMBRACE POSITIVITY**



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## INDEPENDENT

'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 in 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 and is based in Moyross, Limerick. We value social justice, equality and fair play and to aim to give people who are rarely heard a voice.

We produce journalism to highlight valuable work funded or supported by Government departments and agencies. We provide a platform for those on the ground in communities.

Our readers include workers, activists and volunteers nationwide, civil and public servants and many more involved in social inclusion and community development.

'Changing Ireland' is core-funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

See page 3 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:



An Roinn Forbartha  
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Department of Rural and  
Community Development

### 3 EDITORIAL

**4 AWARDS:** Self-employed successes

**5 NEWS:** Social Enterprise policy changes

**6-7 INTERVIEW:** Taylor Richardson, teen leader

**8-9 'HELPING HANDS':** Where to find support

**10-11 YOUTH AWARDS:** Carrick-On-Suir win / **HORACE**

**12-13 SHOWCASE:** South Co. Dublin Community Day

**14 SPEECH:** Why not-for-profits & volunteers are best

**15-17: SOCIAL FARMING:** Experience in the fields

**18-19: DISCRIMINATION:** Travellers feel it as before

**20 NATIONAL AWARDS:** Councils and communities

**21-23: STORY-TELLING:** Community workers take stage

**24 OPINION:** Why we have to keep justifying Community Development

**25 EMPLOYMENT:** Northside pleased with LES results

**26-27 TELL RTÉ!** We have many voices, not one!

**28 TECH:** Imagining the rural community of the future

## FRONT COVER PHOTOS

Thanks to: Nicole Vaughan, Taylor Richardson and Northside Family Resource Centre, Limerick. Photos from Fettercairn, Ballina & Monaghan by 'Changing Ireland'.

contents



**C**an every youth worker, community worker and academic in the community and voluntary sector do the triangle challenge?

Of course we all can.

Workers the length and breadth of Ireland have taken to triangle-dancing during breaks.

**SIPTU's community section** do it daily on the roof of Connolly Hall.

They're experts at in Bernardos, the INOU, Leargas, Slieveardagh Rural Development, and it's replaced step-dancing forever

in Inishowen. Everyone in 'Changing Ireland' can do it. We barely boil the kettle anymore.

The ceiling has collapsed in a number of **local authority chief officer's** rooms where they are responsible for working with communities.

In the community side of the **Department of Rural and Community Development**, they barely sit at their desks anymore they're dancing so much.

In **Maynooth**, the community and voluntary lecturers have

been barred from campus for distracting others from their studies.

The crew in **Community Work Ireland**, based in Galway plan to perform their triangle challenge for **Galway 2020**.

If any of the above seems exaggerated, just ask yourself how long more you're going to spend working in communities without knowing how to do the triangle challenge!

It's easy (ahem!).

Just watch the video of youngsters from **Northside Family Resource Centre**,

Ballynanty, Limerick (pictured above) giving a demo.

Northside FRC staff hope to use triangle dancing as a team-building exercise on their annual staff day out. Well done to community worker Mary Hughes - a great idea!

Of course, it's not called a challenge for no reason!

**W:** <http://bit.ly/CI-TriangleChall>



Q: What's the difference between ignorance and apathy?  
A: I don't know and I don't care.

## GIVE IT TO TEENS TO RUN - THE PLANET



**B**ack in 2001, I never saw the day coming when a 15-year-old activist from Florida, USA - with no connection to Ireland - would take the front cover lead spot in 'Changing Ireland'.

Congratulations Taylor Richardson! Times are changing fast and the interview - by Kirsty Tobin - knocked us off our feet.

Particularly since social media emerged as a tool over 10 years ago, activists

the world over - and ever younger activists at that - are connecting. Language isn't even the barrier it once was.

If you have children, you see it yourself. Year-on-year, outside (online) influence has grown stronger on young people growing up in this globalised world. And it aint all bad!

Today, youths who can afford to connect (about half of all youths globally) are influencing each other.

Taylor is especially inspirational. She has a real knack for bringing people together and empowering them and we believe she will inspire you.

Also setting a fabulous example here at home is Nicole Vaughan from Carrick-on-Suir. She and her team of teen journalists produce a

local positive news publication to encourage all young people to hold their heads high. The project - instigated after a number of suicides locally - won the top award at the Aldi Foróige Youth Citizenship Awards this year.

We, of course, applaud community-minded people coming together to publish positive news. A notable thing about this winning project is that it is essentially engaged in story-telling and that's something that is spreading across the Sector - telling the positive stories of change.

The most encouraging thing, however, about Taylor and her many followers, Nicole and her crew, and Greta Thunberg from Sweden and the millions of new climate change activists who look up to her, is their age. All are teenagers.

The youth are taking over. At long last! The generations that went before them have polluted a paradise, our planet.

Now, young people's ideas and ways of protest are spreading fast and they're lighting a fire in our bellies.

Previous generations haven't done near enough and I hope they show us how to burn the arses off markets, governments and corporations who don't take climate change, poverty and inequality seriously.

*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.



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### 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.

*Dough is the wrong word for money.  
Dough sticks to your hands.*



## NATIONAL

# Wheatgrass grower Derek Walker an inspiration to all

Derek Walker's product - grass - graced our front page three years ago. Since then, he's sold enough to cover the pitch at Croke Park, but his grass is different than the kind a sliotar skims over. People consume this grass for its health benefits.

Derek was, for a time, unemployed. Like others, he had a small business idea that - once he received the right support - could provide him with sustainable work so, like thousands of others every year, he availed of the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA).

*The BTWEA scheme encourages people getting certain social welfare payments to become self-employed. There is also a separate Short-Term Enterprise Allowance, which supports people on Jobseeker's Benefit to start their own business.*

Through this scheme, people have opened bakeries and hair salons and become self-employed gym instructors (to give just a few examples). They received training and advice from Local Development Companies (LDCs)\*.

And, in many cases, these small businesses went from being unemployed to becoming employers.

Across the board, most



• Derek Walker in 2019.

of the businesses helped through the BTWEA have had continued success.

Derek was truly entrepreneurial in his ambition to produce frozen wheatgrass shots. His was also very much a family



• Derek's story made our front cover in Autumn, 2016.

affair, and his wife Anna is his business partner.

Late last year, Derek and Anna's products - Natnoot juices - were accepted into SuperValu's 'Food Academy' and are now available in-store. Two of the newest juices are called 'Achieve' and 'Believe'.

Before starting Natnoot, Derek literally faced a dark future, and needed a business idea that would provide an income long-term - he had degenerative loss of sight and was becoming increasingly blind.

Today, he is an inspiration to other small entrepreneurs on the BTWEA.

Derek and Anna appeared on RTE's 'Nationwide' recently to talk about the reasons behind setting up the company, and the challenges Derek faced.

He was among the guest speakers at the national small enterprise awards in Tullamore, on May 16th, organised by the Irish Local Development Network

*\* The allowances - from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection - are supported by Local Development Companies through the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP), a programme of the Department of Rural & Community Development.*

## Awards for Ireland's best job-creators:- Local people

On May 16th, a national awards ceremony was held in Tullamore, Co. Offaly - to celebrate small enterprise successes among people who availed of the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance.

It is only the second event of its kind - the first was held in 2016.

Remarkably, there were 3,116 rural people among the total of 5,712 people who set up in business with BTWEA support in 2017 (the last year for which statistics are available).

As we said at the time, despite all the huzzah, it is not Google and other tech giants that keep Ireland standing.

"Most employment in this country is provided not by tax-shy multi-nationals, but by small enterprises run by dedicated individuals who usually have their workbase in the local community," we reported then.

It remain true.

We look forward to providing further coverage in our next edition.

## BRIEFS

### TIPP P.O. ANGER, WHILE NEW P.O. OPENS IN KERRY

People in Tipperary are seething with anger at An Post's decision to close Thurles Post Office in the town square and open a new one in a shopping centre.

"Large crowds" marched in protest in March, it was reported by Tipperary media.

One irate local, Pat Morrissey from Ballinahow, told 'Changing Ireland' - "Don't mind what you hear about rural Ireland being looked after, it's not."

Meanwhile, in Baile an Sceilg, on the Iveragh peninsula, Co. Kerry, a community that campaigned hard (as did others) was celebrating because they have saved their Post Office.

Due to State obligations on An Post, the semi-state accepted and agreed to re-open a post office in a Gaeltacht area.

However, of 159 post offices slated for closure, only four were successful in their appeals to An Post.

The four are in Ballycroy, Co. Mayo, Cliffany, Co. Sligo, Clogheen, Co. Tipperary and Baile an Sceilg.

### PEACE FUNDING SAFE FROM BREXIT

The EU has introduced a legal mechanism for the current peace programmes for Northern Ireland and the border region to continue.

Paschal Donohoe, Minister for Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, in late March, welcomed an EU regulation that allows for the continuation of the PEACE and Inter-reg programmes "even if there is a disorderly Brexit".

He said that means that €550m in cross-border investment between 2014 and 2020 remains secure.

### READERS "WORTH THEIR SALT"

A pleased reader in February wrote on Facebook pushing more people to read 'Changing Ireland'.

He wrote, "All of the community development people in Ireland worth their salt read 'Changing Ireland' religiously."

We'll take that, as they say. Help us keep rooted - send us your articles, ideas, suggestions, solutions and opinions. - Ed.



## Champions ready to celebrate

The public has had its say on a draft 'National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland' which was published on April 23rd. The consultation period ended on May 14th and the next step - after taking feedback on board - will see the document submitted to cabinet for approval.

This is a notable moment in the history of social enterprise in Ireland and long-time activists and champions of social enterprise are getting excited about the changes that are coming.

Government adoption of the new policy "will be the subject of a major celebration by long time activists," said Senan Cooke from Dunhill. "The implementation phase will open up many new opportunities for thousands of social enterprise companies, projects and new start-ups. The new policy will empower and build new capacity on the ground in communities. Barriers and blockages will be removed. The vast potential of social enterprise will finally be realised," he said.

Social enterprises have existed in rural and urban Ireland since the 19th century.

The development of the new policy (download: <http://bit.ly/SocEntDraftDRCD>) is being led by the Department of Rural and Community Development and has involved 18 months of research, workshops and consultations.



• Senan Cooke, author of 'The Enterprising Community', with Elaine MacGrath from the PAUL Partnership. Mr Cooke's book, published last year - and not for profit - is packed with case-studies and community development learning.

### DUNHILL DEBATE

In the meantime, Dunhill Ecopark in Co. Waterford hosted a public event on May 13th that brought together EU- and national-level experts to debate the potential social enterprise has to revitalise rural Ireland.

Titled 'Citizens' Dialogue: Revitalising Rural Ireland', the event also aimed to tell people of EU-level support available to social enterprises.

The debate involved Gerry Kiely, head of the European Commission Representation in Ireland; Patrick Klein, the EU Commission's social economy team leader at DG Grow; Brendan Whelan, CEO of the Social Finance Foundation; and Janet O'Toole, community development manager at Connemara West. It was chaired by broadcaster Damien Tiernan.

It was organised by the Waterford Europe Direct Information Centre in partnership with Dunhill and the European Commission Representation in Ireland.

- AM

## Rural & Community Development Committee visit Wexford & Waterford social enterprises



Members of the Joint Oireachtas Committee for Rural and Community Development visited Gorey, Co. Wexford and Dunhill, Co. Waterford, on March 27th, to see for themselves enterprise developments in both places.

The visitors included TDs Joe Carey, Martin Kenny and Éamon Ó Cuív and Senators Paudie Coffey and Grace O'Sullivan.

Committee press officer Shawn Pogatchnik and committee policy advisor Sarah O'Farrell

committee policy advisor accompanied the public representatives.

They were welcomed to 'The Hatch Lab' incubation space in Gorey by Tom Banville, head of enterprise, John O Connor, manager of The Hatch Lab and Vanessa Tierney, co-founder of Abodoo.

In Dunhill, the group ate in the ecopark and were brought up to date on projects covering social enterprise, environment, education, geology,

voluntary housing, heritage, tourism and adventure pursuits. The party were also taken on a tour around Dunhill's four villages.

The committee made the visits on as part of their work in writing a report on the future of Rural Ireland. They have made several excursions to different parts of the country over the past year.

**Follow the committee's work here:** <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/committees/32/rural-and-community-development/>



# INTERNATIONAL: A Florida teen view

## She's heading for Mars, but seeks emp - Interview with STEM campaigner Taylor

BY KIRSTY TOBIN

### INTRO

**K**irsty Tobin talks to Taylor Richardson, one of the best-known teenage activists in the USA. Taylor is campaigning to see more girls in science, tech, engineering and maths (STEM), and she very much intends to go to space herself one day.

The teen influencer is also active within her local community and is a black rights advocate.

Taylor made international headlines in 2016 when she raised \$18,000 to send girls in her hometown to see the Katherine Johnson biopic 'Hidden Figures'. In 2018, she topped this feat by raising \$100,000 to enable girls to see 'A Wrinkle in Time'.

Kirsty reached out to Ms Richardson and the busy 15-year-old high school student from Jacksonville, Florida, was kind enough to make time for us.

**Kirsty Tobin:** You've aspired to be an astronaut, scientist and engineer from a young age. What sparked your interest and got you started on this path?

**Taylor Richardson:** I was always fascinated by space and by the size of the sky. Then, after reading [NASA astronaut] Dr Mae Jemison's autobiography about being the first African American woman to go to space, I realised that I could also be an astronaut if I put my mind to it.

So I raised money to attend space camps and kept taking classes and reading about new discoveries in space, technology and science to stay informed.

**KT:** STEM – and space travel – are historically white- and male-dominated fields. What has pursuing knowledge and experience in these areas been like for you as a young woman of colour?

**TR:** Honestly, it's been tough. Adults sometimes try to discourage me because I'm young, or try to push me toward an 'easier' path because they had a hard time reaching their goals.

But I'm determined to travel into space even if there are not many role models that look like me in the field – partly because I've found lots of supporters around the country and the world who feel that, with the right push, I can reach my goals and they and their children can too.

I saw this when I started fundraising to pay for



• Taylor Richardson takes a selfie in the cinema. She crowdfunded enough money to bring more than 7,000 girls and women to two empowering films she thought they should have the chance to see.

screenings for the movie 'Hidden Figures'.

After I saw an early screening at the White House with First Lady Michelle Obama, I knew I had to do something to help young girls learn about and see the film. When the campaign spread around the world, I knew that others wanted to hear and see more about the contributions of women and people of colour in



• Michelle Obama and Oprah Winfrey are among Taylor's supporters. With over 50,000 tweets and 6,500 followers to her name, Taylor Richardson (@astrostarbright) wants to see more women in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM). She also tweets about #BlackLivesMatter.

STEM and space travel.

It showed me that one person can create real change in society.

**KT:** How can a career in STEM, or even an understanding of it, make a difference in someone's life and future?

**TR:** If parents and teachers explained to kids how the elements that make up STEM play such a big part in our everyday lives, more would be interested in the field.

The world needs doctors, but there are so many other fields that an understanding of STEM can lead to.

Most of us carry a cellphone in our pocket, ride in a car or bus daily, watch TV, listen to music on the radio or stream it, but never think about how they are STEM-related. If students knew at a very young age how STEM was used in the things they do every day, more would be interested and would start tinkering with inventions and coding before high school.

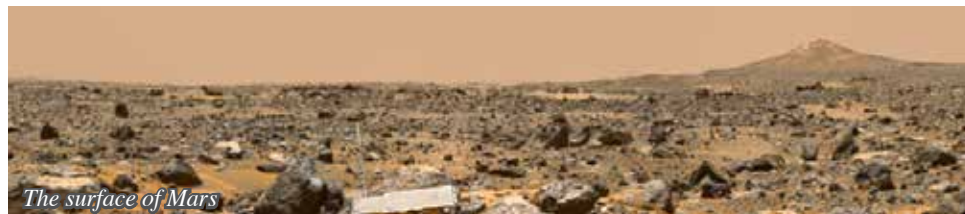
**KT:** Why is it important for girls and young women to learn more about STEM and seek more STEM-related knowledge?

**TR:** So they understand that there are no limits to what they can do, and that maths and science are not just for boys.

*My friend told me I was being delusional. I almost fell off my unicorn.*

# on Community Activism

## Powerment & equality first for Richardson (15)



The surface of Mars

***“The more support girls are given, the faster their confidence will grow. When that happens, their voices get stronger, louder and more focused, and they have less fear about sharing their ideas, which might change the world.”***

STEM allows for people to solve problems, and make things easier and more efficient. Because girls and young women have different experiences than boys and young men, the apps, games and tech ideas they create would be different than those created by boys. They would be super useful and unique to the experiences of their creators.

**KT: In your opinion, why should the STEM sector seek people from a wide variety of ethnicities, genders and backgrounds?**

TR: Diversity of ideas, experiences, genders and backgrounds helps to create the best products.

If everyone in the STEM sector thought the same, was from the same place and even looked the same, there would be so many problems that couldn't be addressed properly because the problems wouldn't be fully understood.

If all the engineers working on a project are from Asia, for example, it's going to be hard for them to understand issues that only come up near the equator.

They say experience is the best teacher, and it also provides the best perspective when it comes to solving a wide variety of problems, which is what STEM does.

**KT: How do you think empowering girls and young women can have an impact in the broader community?**

TR: The more support girls are given, the faster their confidence will grow. When that happens, their voices get stronger, louder and more focused, and they have less fear about sharing their ideas, which might change the world.

The world has lots of problems that need to be fixed, so empowering girls and young women can only help problems get solved faster.

**KT: Your advocacy goes beyond STEM and**

beyond fighting for young women... You've also led the successful 'Hidden Figures' and 'A Wrinkle in Time'\*\* crowdfunding efforts - and others to create scholarships for Space Camp - as well as leading a book drive.

**What inspires you to continue to work to support communities?**

TR: My mom and grandma taught me the importance of community and helping others.

When my mother didn't have the extra money to send me to space camp, my community pitched in and made it happen.

I just want to pay that back to others when I can, because sometimes you only need one person to believe in you and your life changes forever.

**KT: What would you like to see community organisations doing better to support girls and young women to foster an interest in STEM?**

TR: Equal support would be nice... Give us the same chance to make mistakes and learn that the boys and young men get.

I would like to have organisations asking our opinions about what is needed, and putting [pictures of girls] on the flyers so we know we're included.

Understand that we don't have to be treated differently. We just want to be treated fairly!

\* 'Hidden Figures' tells the story of three brilliant black women at NASA working to help launch an astronaut into space.

\*\* 'A Wrinkle In Time' is based on a science-fiction fantasy novel and features a mostly female cast, including many "women of color".  
"I wanted all girls, especially girls of color, to know they can be whatever they want to be when they grow up," Taylor told 'Good Morning America' tv show last year.

## BRIEFS

### PARTICIPATION GUIDE DUE SOON

A new 'Public Participation Network User Guide' is soon to be published. It is currently being reviewed and is near the finishing stages, says the Department of Rural and Community Development.

### COMMUNITIES SPONSORING REFUGEES

The pilot phase of 'Community Sponsorship Ireland' has begun. The initiative allows communities to come together to sponsor a refugee family.

It was launched in March by David Stanton (right) - Minister of State with special responsibility for Equality, Immigration and Integration.

To sponsor a family, visit Nasc's website ([nascireland.org](http://nascireland.org)) or email: [maria@nascireland.org](mailto:maria@nascireland.org).



### GAS PLANT WIN FOR CLIMATE CHANGE CAMPAIGNERS

A €500m terminal in the Shannon estuary to allow the importation of liquefied gas, including contentious fracked gas, will not for now go ahead.

The High Court ruled in February that the European Court of Justice must first look into the matter, taking into account the EU's Habitats Directive. That could take two years.

The case was taken by Friends of the Irish Environment (FIE) which has a mandate under European law to protect the environment.

A 13-group coalition opposes the development on environmental grounds and activists were jubilant about the referral to Europe, including some who contacted us.

Campaign group 'Not Here Not Anywhere' said: "Given everything that is happening globally with the Student Strikes and Green Deal in America, there is definitely something in the air. The people are rising and building a global climate movement."

When the developer Shannon LNG first secured planning permission in 2008, the impact on climate was not a major consideration for planners. That is changing.

Following the high court decision, the US company stated that it remained "committed to advancing this critical project for Ireland's security and diversity of energy supply."

We were unable to get a direct statement from the developer whose website was down as we went to print.





# FIND FUNDS FASTER: Mayo, Donegal,

## MEETINGS FOR VOLUNTEERS & GROUPS TO CUT TO THE CHASE & SECURE FUNDS

### - 'HELPING HANDS' – six information sessions for community groups about improving grant applications

The first 'Helping Hands' event to give tips and advice to volunteers seeking funds for their local community projects was held in Ballina, Co. Mayo, on April 25th.

Mayo-based Minister Michael Ring has often expressed his exasperation at the paperwork involved in securing funding. He launched the Ballina event, the first of a half-dozen such evenings being held around the country.

The events are aimed at community groups that have had no success or limited success previously applying for funding. However, all are welcome to attend.

The events aim to give hints and tips on how to make a better application and how to identify local supports that community groups can draw on.

If you can't make one of the events, up-to-date advice and resources will soon be made available online.

The five other scheduled events:

**Border Region:** 9th May - Finn Valley, Stranorlar, Co. Donegal.

**South Region:** 16th May - James O'Keefe Institute, Newmarket, Co. Cork.

**Mid-West Region:** 23rd May - Southill Area Centre, Limerick.

**East Region:** 28th May - St Mary's Youth & Community Centre, Tullamore, Co. Offaly.

**Dublin Region:** 30th May - Darndale Belcamp VC, Coolock, Dublin.

Photos by 'Changing Ireland'.

- **FUNDS YOU DIDN'T KNOW EXISTED**
- **TIPS FROM GRANT ADJUDICATORS**
- **MEET KEY STAFF**
- **MAKE CONTACTS**
- **ONE-TO-ONES**



• Staff from the Department of Rural and Community Development ready to give a 'Helping Hand' to community groups about improving grant applications.

## SHOCKED: VOLUNTEERS STILL ACTIVE 40

**If you could shoot 40 years into the future, would you meet the same people volunteering as you know now? Most likely.**

**Would they still be wondering where to get funding to keep the show on the road? Yes!**

My family moved to Ballina, Co. Mayo, around the time the pope visited Ireland, in 1979. I

lived there as a kid for two years and loved it. I was in the scouts and played tennis and rugby, thanks of course to the adults who volunteered in these clubs and groups.

On April 25th, 2019, I strolled into an event called 'Helping Hands' - an information evening for volunteers and groups to find out about grants and connect with funders. I didn't think I'd make connections from way back in my youth.

I met a scout leader going in. "Did you have Benny Walkin?" he asked.

"I did. He's hardly still involved?" I said.

"He is. Still going strong."

I was astonished. That meant that Benny had given over 40 years of volunteering to the scouts.

• Benny Walkin (right) was honoured in March this year for 48 years service to scouting in Ballina.





# Cork , Limerick, Dublin & Offaly venues



- People learned of local supports that community groups can draw upon.



- If the 100-plus crowd that attended the Ballina event is representative, then the 'Helping Hands' events are meeting a definite need for more information on grants and funding.



- Making connections: one-to-one.



- Siofra Kilcullen, Mayo Co. Co., with Minister Michael Ring.



- A Mayo County Council staff member helps out a volunteer.



- All smiles at the first 'Helping Hands' event.

## YEARS ON - STILL LOOKING FOR FUNDING

Inside, I met a man - Vincent Frawley - who came to live in Ballina in 1978, a year before my family moved here. I remember taking tennis lessons one summer. Vincent may well have been one of my coaches. He's still involved.

Back in 1979-'81, we liked to drive out to Lacken and see the unspoilt beauty and play on the beach.

A woman from Lacken had driven in - on her one night off as a carer for her husband - to pick

up tips. She is volunteering for 25 years with Lacken Community Care and other groups. Over 60% of the population in her area now consists of older people and they need to find out what grants are there to support their community.

The draw of these superb information evenings - there are five more to be held - is that they connect fantastic groups with grant schemes they might not otherwise know about.

The events are aimed at community groups that have had no success or limited success previously, but all are welcome to attend. They aim to help people to identify local supports that community groups can draw upon.

Grand adjudicators and others are on hand - 'Helping Hands' - to give expert tips and advice on how best to fill out funding application forms.

Just one of many tips given: "Don't lower your chances

by using old data, when your population might have grown. Use the latest CSO figures."

Everyone's a winner at these events (for dates/locations, see left).

The events in each area are run by the Department of Rural and Community Development, Pobal, the Local Authority, the Irish Local Development Network, and Local Development Companies.

- Allen Meagher



# AWARDS: 14,000 youths involved

## Teens' positive news project w

A story-telling project has come out tops in this year's Aldi Foróige Youth Citizenship Awards, announced in April.

Youths from Carrick-On-Suir, Co. Tipperary, launched a monthly newsletter called 'The Positivity Pages'.

The group of 4th year students, mentored by a counsellor, were motivated after their town was struck by three tragedies.

Things came to a head late last year and 200 local people met to see what could be done about drug dealing and addiction.

Separately, the BeYou group felt that young people are often surrounded by negativity - through the media, in the community, and through their own thoughts and online.

So, they launched their newspaper to highlight the positive achievements of young people and to raise self-esteem, to create a sense of belonging and build confidence in their peers. The local newspaper picked up on their positivity and incorporated their publication into the newspaper.

Carrick-on-Suir's challenges are no different to any other town and young people often come up with the best responses.

Across the country, young Foróige teams worked on community projects covering equality, homelessness, climate change,

social inclusion, community events, mental health and culture.

This year, seven projects won gold, included Adam Fletcher from Offaly who carried out maintenance work on church ruins, and The Saturday Club in Dublin 15 which raised funds to rescue seals.

This year is the fiftieth anniversary of the Youth Citizenship Programme, which was first run by Foróige in 1969. Over 14,000 young people took part this year.

Seán Campbell, CEO of Foróige said, "There's a reason this programme has lasted fifty years; it works. The young people who entered the awards this year invested over 82,000 hours in community action projects and that's something that we should be really proud of as a country."

The awards have grown more popular since Foróige teamed up with sponsor Aldi five years ago.

Incidentally, this is the first ever non-Foróige group to win a Foróige Citizenship award. Shana Mansfield is the counsellor working with the BeYou group featured here.

They meet regularly in Foróige's centre in Carrick.

W: <https://www.facebook.com/ForoigeNypCarrickonsuir/>



• Shana Mansfield, Nicole Vaughan (also pictured below) launched 'The Positivity Pages'. the project was chosen

## Q&A with team who are mo

### 1. What does The Positivity Pages do differently from the mainstream media, or from social media sites?

It's a positive newspaper.

Normal newspapers provide us with news about negative events such as thefts, murders and deaths. Although we understand that the media needs to report on such news, we [choose to] provide the community with good news about great things people have done in the community - it gives us a positive view of Carrick-on-Suir.

We also have a personal touch in that the paper is focused on young people in our town, which gives us a great opportunity to raise awareness and help to support positive and wonderful local young people.

### 2. Why is it important for young people to be exposed to positive news?

Our age group can often be labelled in a negative light. Young people need encouragement and to be celebrated for even the smallest positive achievements, as it will encourage them to do more of what they want and love.

When a young person feels believed in and is recognised for their work, it builds their self-esteem. When a young

person does something good, it also provides possibilities and hope for others of the same age.

### 3. How has working on this paper helped the community and the young people involved?

The paper has helped by inspiring young people and by providing a positive outlook on Carrick-on-Suir and its young people.

The paper also provides tips and information about different mental health topics. These are written by Shana, who is a cognitive behavioural therapist working with young people. This section is helpful to any reader!

As a member of the team behind the paper, it has given me [Nicole] a brighter outlook on life and has made me a better person. Being involved in something so great it makes me feel really good about myself and my abilities, and being a member is one of the best decisions I have ever made.

### 4. What can communities around Ireland learn from the Positivity Pages' success?

I think there should be a group in each community who does something similar to provide better mental health in each county of Ireland. The success



• Nicole Vaughan on the bus home to Carrick-On-Suir.



# Wins top award



(along with trophy), Kyle Walsh and Sophie Telford - members of the team that won as Overall Winner of the Citizenship Awards presented annually by Foróige.

## Model for others

of the Positivity Pages should encourage any young person to reach their full potential. Being involved in such a project is an excellent outlet for creating positive mental health and every community should get to experience it.

### 5. Generally, what were the negative things that prompted your youth group to respond so positively?

I [Nicole] can't speak for everyone in the group, but a huge reason why I - and some other group members - got involved was because of the mental health issues among young people in Carrick-on-Suir.

Our town has experienced a number of youth suicides and, after losing my friend, I decided to get involved in something that could help our community and create positivity for many people, so maybe something like this wouldn't happen again.

Hopefully the people of Carrick-on-Suir will have a better view on life and will be able to see all the possibilities and the experiences they can endure. And, hopefully, the paper will help people to live a better life.

## Set up a Foróige club in your area!

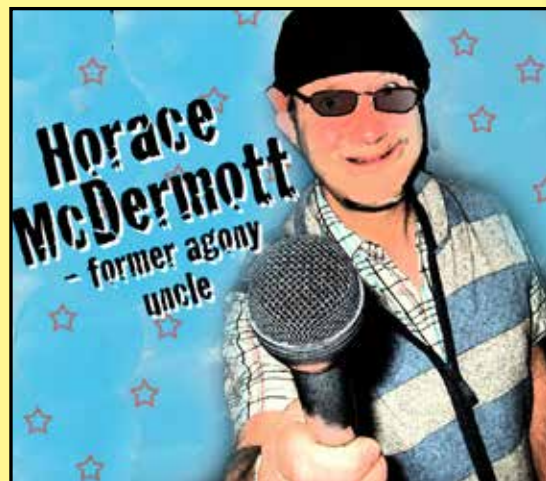
There is support ready to go if you wish to set up a Foróige Club in your area. A club needs three essential ingredients to get going and Foróige staff will help to get these in place. You need:

- young people who want to take part,
- a small group of adult volunteers,
- a place where you can meet.

**More info:** <https://www.foroige.ie/newclubs>



## Horace's Diary



## SEE YA ALL AT 'THE SQUARE'S SUMMIT!'

I'm now a lecturer in community development. Shock, horror! I know, it's great! Look, it's only for 12 hours per week, but think of how I'm going to shape young minds for the better.

And I'm a guest speaker, can you imagine, at this year's 'The Square Summit', Ireland's premier conference for community do-gooders and a few outright rebels like me.

Of course, they really do need more action-orientated radical voices for change - like yours truly - to balance off the Miriam O'Callaghan talkie-types.

The theme last year was 'Governance For Good' (yawn). This year is better - the theme is 'Equality and You'. It means I get paid the same as Miriam (or whoever).

If she speaks for nothing, then I'll eat my social inclusion hat. We can't all be volunteers.

It's some turnaround. When I was a shouty student back in 2001, the same lot heading up The Square ostrichised me (they buried my head in the sand) because I wrote that George Bush was my hero.

To me, Bush had found the most effective approach to reducing global poverty: Start with the poorest country in the world - it was Afghanistan back then - and bomb it out of existence. He nearly succeeded.

Trump selling bombs to the Saudis to bomb Yemen shows how dedicated the US remains.

I've moved on. Community development is slow, but the struggle continues.

In fact, I must remind my colleagues at the conference that students also struggle (not just to find a bed or get out of it). They've got smartphones and know that plastic and climate change is going to finish off humanity, but some of them are still as thick as an IPA yearbook.

Some students are even clueless about politics. Fiona thought the government's confidence and supply agreement was an arrangement drug users had with their local dealers.

Seanie thought power-sharing was loaning your phone charger to someone else.

Harry thought e quality was a way to measure the purity of ecstasy tablets.

Zacharia thought that a voluntary body was something to do with sexual consent.

When asked to comment on the White Paper on Drugs, Barry from Cork said Rizla were the best.

Him and Josephine haven't a hope. She still believes that a sustainable community culture is a bacteria.

I have hopes for Fiona. In due course, I'll refer the rest of them to the relevant services they hope to one day work for.

We're all in the meantime going to The Square Summit. €250 per person - our collective arses! (Barry will open the fire exits from 9am - throw him five euro, he doesn't like being up that early).

# SOCIAL INCLUSION: Full house in Fettercairn

Fettercairn, Tallaght

## South Dublin County showcase

- Minister hails SICAP workers, volunteers and schemes in speech

**H**undreds of volunteers, local authority, government and agency staff joined community development workers in Fettercairn, in February, at an event to showcase the work of South Dublin Community Partnership.

The open day was launched by Minister Michael Ring.

The event highlighted the importance of the new Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) which is worth €190m to communities over five years and which has helped 7,649 community groups and 143,114 individuals to date. It will run until 2022.

Remarking on the figures - which have exceeded targets - the Minister said, "It's a credit to everyone involved and we're building on solid foundations."

"I can see how you are all enthused by the work you do. I'm looking at what this programme does and everything I see I'm very happy with," he said.

He urged workers to "continue the good work".

"I will be fighting your cause, we won't win every fight....

But I'll be there to make sure that these schemes and these programmes... must be left there."

The Minister made a point, as he often does, of thanking volunteers nationwide who work in communities.

Giving examples of people he personally knew, he hailed the power of schemes to change lives.

"My department is Rural and Community Development and the most important part of that is community. Sometimes we forget about communities," he said.

He believes his department should be strengthened.

Welcoming representatives to the event from other government departments providing support to communities - Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Education and Skills, and Justice and Equality - he said his department should be expanded.

"We should be looking around

***"I will be fighting your cause, we won't win every fight.... But I'll be there to make sure that these schemes and these programmes... must be left there."***



• Staff of South Dublin County Partnership are all top-class kickboxers.

at many other departments - health, social protection and (others) that should be in (my department). We should have overall responsibility in relation to community. I know that's being looked at. I'm looking at a few areas myself where I can bring in

schemes and we'll be doing that over the next number of months."

"I hope - whatever government comes in after the next election - that this Department will be left and not alone that it be left, but that it be strengthened."

"The only problem is that I don't have more funding," said Minister Ring, determined to see that change.

- AM

## Ring calls for cabinet meeting in community centre

**I**magine the cabinet meeting in your community centre! Minister Michael Ring called in February for just that.

The Minister for Rural and Community Development proposed that the Government should consider holding a cabinet meeting in a community centre.

He didn't say when it should happen, or where, but cabinet meetings have in recent years been held in Sligo and Kerry.

He made the suggestion while attending the open day in Fettercairn Community and Youth Centre, Tallaght.

The minister said members of the cabinet should meet beforehand with local groups to "see what's going on in this

country".

He said, "When I look around here today, sometime, maybe, a cabinet meeting should be held in a place like this. Groups like this should meet the cabinet before the cabinet meeting is actually held, because they'd actually see what's going on in this country," he said.

The possibility of protests were among the challenges raised by centre managers we spoke to. However, the opportunity is there for a centre to issue an invitation.

The minister also welcomed "new people coming into this country".

"They're all very welcome. Let's support them and give them the respect they deserve," he said.

***"Sometime, maybe, a cabinet meeting should be held in a place like this... They'd actually see what's going on in this country."***



• After the speeches, Minister Ring joined a local Roma accordion group for an impromptu sing-song. **PHOTO BY: Brian Mac Cormaic.**



# uses its projects at open day



• Members of the Roma community attended.



• Cllr. Mark Ward, Mayor of South Dublin County Council, liked the community spirit.



• Larry O'Neill, CEO of SDCP, Minister Michael Ring and staff.

• **Minister Michael Ring:**

*"I'm at this in government every single day - But for the voluntary group and the community sector, neither the county council, the health board, or the State would be able to do the work that we need done."*

*The Minister said to Marie Price-Bolger: "Marie - you made a superb speech - you put it very well..." (see previous page)*



• You could sense the atmosphere at the event, Minister Ring noted.



• Larry O'Neill, CEO of SDCP, Minister Michael Ring and Emily Smartt, social enterprise development officer with SDCP.

**PHOTOS BY: Changing Ireland**

## Headline Figures on Funding Allocated by the Dept. of Rural and Community Development - as of March 22nd

- The new **Regional Rural Development Fund** aims to revitalise rural Ireland, to make a significant and sustainable impact on rural communities, and to address de-population in small towns, villages and rural areas.  
- 84 projects approved for a total of €86m.
- The new **Town and Village Renewal Scheme** supports the rejuvenation of rural towns and villages with populations of under 10,000 people. Funded projects must be of viable, long-term benefit.  
- 675 projects with a value of €53m.
- The new **Local Improvement Scheme** provides funding to help Councils carry out improvement works on private and non-publicly maintained roads  
- over 1,100 roads since September 2017, to a value of €48m.
- The **Outdoor Infrastructure Scheme** funds new facilities and the maintenance, enhancement or promotion of existing outdoor recreational infrastructure in rural areas.  
- 600 projects since 2016, with a value of €41m.
- The **Community Services Programme** supports community-based organisations to provide local social, economic and environmental services through a social enterprise model.  
- over 400 organisations benefiting by over €40m.

- A new **Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)** launched last year. It aims to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion and equality. It supports work with the most disadvantaged and the hardest to reach in communities. The programme is the successor to others stretching back over two decades.  
- €190m for 2018-2022 period.
- **CLÁR** supports the sustainable development of rural areas that have suffered the greatest levels of population decline, with the aim of attracting people to live and work there. It mostly funds small infrastructural projects such as play areas, cancer care transport and community safety measures.  
- 1,270 projects since 2016, with a value of €25m.
- The **LEADER programme** is an EU initiative to support rural development projects initiated at the local level in order to revitalise rural areas and create jobs.  
- 1,686 projects have been approved for funding of almost €58m. A further 379 projects, with a value of over €22m, are in the approvals process.
- The **Community Enhancement Programme** is a flexible, streamlined and targeted approach to fund facilities in disadvantaged communities. It covers small and large, from lawnmowers and IT equipment to minor renovations and buildings.  
- €12.5m in 2018. €4.5m in 2019.

- The **Seniors Alert Scheme** encourages community support for vulnerable older people through the provision of personal monitored alarms, allowing them to live securely in their homes with confidence, independence and peace of mind.  
- €7m spent in 2018 – more than 19,000 personal alarms delivered.
- The **New Library Strategy** aims to develop the public library service over the next five years. Libraries are an essential community service.  
- €7m for digital services and facilities in 2018.

### OTHER INITIATIVES

- **Walks Scheme** – 39 trails, value €2m in 2018. €4m for 2019.
- **Tidy Towns** - €1.4m in 2017 and 2018.
- **Funding for Agricultural Shows** - €800,000 in 2017; €600,000 in 2018.
- **Men's Sheds** - €500,000 allocated in 2018.

### DEPT'S 2019 BUDGET

- **2019:** Current €153m + Capital €138m = **Total €291m.**
- **2018:** Current €144m + Capital €87.5m = **Total €231.5m.**

## SPEECH

# For-profit private companies cannot match what we do

**- Remember, volunteers make communities work!**

South Dublin Community Partnership (SDCP) held an open day in Fettercairn, in February. Among the speakers was the its chairperson, Marie Price-Bolger.

She is also the chairperson of the Irish Local Development Network, the umbrella body for Local Development Companies (LDCs).

She emphasised “the capacity within the not-for-profit sector to deliver programmes that government can’t, and to deliver them in an effective, efficient and value for money way.”

Citizens - not profits - are at the centre of everything done by Local Development Companies. Noting that fees are paid to directors of for-profit, private companies now edging into the Community and Voluntary Sector, she said:

“LDCs are all not-for-profit, registered charities that operate to a very high standard. For example, SDCP adheres to EU audit standards.

“We operate for the benefit of clients. We reinvest every penny in our communities, and not in directors’ fees, as we (volunteer directors) well know.

“Our sector consistently provides services on behalf of government departments in an efficient, effective and value for money model that cannot be matched by any private sector programme,” she said.

## DRIVING COMMUNITIES

Directly addressing Minister Ring, she said:

“Your Department and the SICAP programme are the best enablers of social inclusion in this country, by supporting and maintaining a presence in disadvantaged communities, providing courses, education for all ages, employment supports, alcohol awareness and managing addiction programmes, health and wellbeing programmes.

“All (of these) are supported by



• Marie Price-Bolger, chairperson of South Dublin County Partnership, speaking at the open day.

SICAP with additional funding leveraged from other departments and agencies.”

“Without SICAP many of the projects here today would not exist - it is the glue that holds the SDCP inter-agency work together.”

SICAP and previous community programmes were also, she said, an endorsement by government of “the culture of the volunteering that drives the development of communities”.

## EU-LEVEL AUDITING

She showed how SDCP was “a prime example of how this sector can provide services that government departments can’t do themselves:

- We are not adverse to change, or audit or impact assessment.

- We have a minimum of eight audits each year and we are accountable for every cent of the €11m that comes into the county through us.

- We are transparent, faithful to our mission of social inclusion and adhere to the complex

requirements of our 34 funding bodies.

- SDCP is the embodiment of inter-agency work that delivers for the State by an action-orientated committees and not just talking shops,” she said.

## MESSAGE FOR CABINET

While acknowledge the Minister’s “own personal commitment to social inclusion”, she pointed out that “change is still being thrown at us ...by different government departments”.

“The latest one to directly impact us here, and nationally, is that cabinet is going to look at employment services in 2020. We want to make sure that the message you bring back to cabinet is that employment services should remain with Local Development Companies where the State is getting efficient, effective and value for money. We engage with the client though a totally professional and knowledgeable staff.”

## HIDDEN VOLUNTEERS

Ms. Price-Bolger thanked the Volunteer Centre, while drawing attention to volunteers who are rarely noticed, but whose contribution is critical - those who sit on committees. Some are retired people, but many such volunteers work flat out in the community sector, yet recognise the importance of this behind-the-scenes volunteering.

“They give endless hours through boards and executive committees and various sub-committees,” she said.

She counted herself as one of these volunteers: “We make time to make Local Development Companies work.”

She also emphasised the value of local volunteers.

“People who live, work and volunteer in their area have a knowledge and understanding that “does not get acknowledged enough within government circles”, she said.

- Allen Meagher



# PARTICIPATION: Social Farming



## MEET THE CORRIGANS A SOCIAL FARMING FAMILY



**This is not what the Corrigans always have for tea!**

• Counting the biscuits after everyone's gone! Family members Corina, Christopher and Patrick Corrigan relax after a successful open day in January.  
*Inset: The Corrigans with Martin Hannigan, social farming participant.*

# Funding 3,000 social farmers

Department of Rural and Community Development officials "see the benefits" for everyone involved in social farming and want to "do more" to support the initiative.

While popular in mainland Europe, social farming has only begun to take off in Ireland in the past decade.

Paul Geraghty is the Principal Officer for the Social Inclusion and Communities Unit in the Department of Rural and Community Development. He and colleague Lisa Keveney were guests

at the Open Day in Co. Monaghan.

"We see the benefits to the participants, to the farmers and what it means to people," said Mr. Geraghty. He welcomed a report by the team in Social Farming Ireland, titled 'Social Farming and

the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)'.

"The report is going to help us figure out how SICAP can work with social farming into the future. It has great case-studies and is hugely interesting," he said.



## "IT'S GETTING PURCHASE EVERYWHERE"

"We're very proud as a Department to be associated - through SICAP - with this. SICAP goes a bit of the way towards enabling social farming across the country. We'd like to see it doing more because it is a tremendous initiative," he said.

He congratulated everyone involved and commended Local Development Companies

for "being imaginative and innovative in challenging funding situations, still making it work and pushing it out. It's getting purchase everywhere - with farmers, participants and there's now a range of government departments involved."

Finally, Mr Geraghty appealed to social farmers: "I'd encourage any farmer involved to talk to their neighbours and sell the benefits of this to them. It's clear it works really well," he said.



# PARTICIPATION: Social Farming is spr



**Exponential growth:** Last year, 300 people went on social farming placements over a combined 2,700 days. Over 56 farmers in 22 counties (ROI) are now involved. Figures have doubled in one year. 45 organisations are contributing and four government departments are lending support.



“Social farming is a relatively new concept based on ancient concepts such as togetherness, belonging and community.”  
- Aisling Moroney, Social Farming Ireland policy worker.



“I got to know my clients far better on the farm than in my office. ...When I meet individuals on a farm, they're much more relaxed. We tend to talk while doing farm activities.”

- Jeanette Leyden, a development worker with Leitrim Development Company.



**Collaborating for Inclusion:** Annamarie McNally from the Department of Agriculture; Aisling Moroney, Policy Officer with Social Farming Ireland and Paul Geraghty, Principal Officer with the Department of Rural and Community Development.



The future looks bright for social farming. As Sean Kelly MEP told readers in 'Changing Ireland last December: "Like the Men's Sheds, it's going to grow and grow because it brings out the best in everybody." Read our coverage here <http://bit.ly/Aut2017> (when growth was predicted - p24-25) and here <http://bit.ly/Dec2018SocF> (Kerry's story - p16-19).



“Corina and Patrick have shown that even on a busy commercial dairy farm, it is possible to make space for inclusion.”  
- Brian Smyth, CEO of Leitrim Development Company.





# Experience in the field

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

Martin Hannigan, a social farming participant, is on placement on Corina and Patrick Corrigan's farm near Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan, and it was clear from talking to them that they've bonded for life. That doesn't happen everytime, but you'd be surprised how often deep connections are forged in social farming.

The phenomenon has spread to 22 counties in the Republic and more than 3,000 people will participate in social farming this year. It is also gaining popularity in Northern Ireland.

Though farming families were traditionally known for their hospitality to strangers - certainly in the days before litigation and modernisation - the idea of social farming as such is new to Ireland.

Open days are regularly held to showcase the idea and the first open day of 2019 was held in January in near-freezing temperatures. The weather put nobody off and 103 people descended on Corina and Patrick Corrigan's farm to learn more.

I met a number of participants and while Martin was shy about being interviewed, he nodded in agreement when Patrick said, "Martin gets a great sense of achievement here."

"We ourselves got great benefits from it too. Round here, I'm always flying around. If you are doing social farming, you need to slow down and take your time."

Brian Smyth from Leitrim Development Company agrees that busy farmers can do social farming too:

"Take people for who they are and do the simple, ordinary things you do on a farm with them and support that person. Corina and Patrick have shown that even on a busy commercial dairy farm, it is possible to make space for inclusion."

In Corrigan's barn, Aisling Moroney, policy worker with Social Farming Ireland, put it all in context for us as we sat on bales of hay, drank tea and listened attentively.

"Social farming is a relatively new concept based on ancient concepts such as togetherness, belonging and community," she said.

## THEY SAID IT WOULDN'T WORK

"The non-believers told us we wouldn't get farmers. They said it was far too risky, that people will never come out for social farming. They said, 'You'll never get insurance for this'. We've overcome all those hurdles," said Aisling.

She paid credit to the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Rural and Community Development.

The latter's Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme directly co-funds social farming placements.

"Through SICAP, We track, monitor and review social farming to make the experience more positive for everybody and our latest research report tells the story of social farming and SICAP."

Community workers with Local Development Companies engage with farmers and participants directly and Aisling described as "invaluable" the local connections and knowledge embedded in these organisations.

"Without people on the ground making this happen, social farming would be happening in a more ad-hoc, risky environment," she said.

Aisling also thanked the departments of Health, and

Employment and Social Protection for their involvement.

## GETTING TO KNOW THE PARTICIPANTS

Jeanette Leyden, a development worker with Leitrim Development, gets her best work done when she puts on her wellies and heads out to farms to meet clients.

"I got to know my clients far better on the farm than in my office. People may have had a very poor experience of the education system and when they come into my office, it's formal and daunting. When I meet individuals on a farm, they're much more relaxed. We tend to talk while doing farm activities," she said.

"Social farming has proved hugely beneficial. Like the SICAP programme, social farming is person-centred, based on the individual's needs and interests. And all credit to the farmers - they really delve into the participants' interests."

"My role in lifelong learning is working with individuals and getting them into employment or training. I have learned that people may face a range of barriers... and accreditation isn't for everyone," said Jeanette.

## NATIONAL FIGURES

Helen Doherty, national co-ordinator of Social Farming Ireland, listed impressive statistics:

"We have worked with 45 different organisations and that's something we're proud of."

"We're reaching into many different sectors. For example, we're reaching into the education sector - with children in school who have challenges. And, it's happening from Donegal to Wexford."

"In 2017, we had 140 participants who experienced over 1,700 days of activity across the country. In 2018, that grew to 300 participants and 2,700 days."

"In 2017, we had 28 farmers. We doubled that in 2018 and now have 56 farmers actively involved."

"In 2017, we were active in 11 counties; we're now active in 22 counties. And we have farmers trained in 25 of the 26 counties in the Republic. Longford is the only county left. We hope to overcome

that this year.

"These figures were compiled in October and we have moved on since then," she said.

(And the figures have gone up again, no doubt).

## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL FARMING

Frank Murtagh, CEO of Westmeath Community Development, said they were first impressed when "a client" came to them with "very positive feedback" from social farming.

Shortly after, in late 2017, Cathy Duffy from the HSE made contact.

"She had a group of people she said she would love to do social farming with," said Frank. "So, I linked her in with our SICAP employment co-ordinator."

After that, a representative from Social Farming Ireland visited and spoke with the staff.

"We have since developed a programme that is more than just social farming," said Frank.

"We put together a four-week training programme on personal development, safety on the farm and we helped the participants with their CVs."

This was supported by SICAP and the pioneering work is documented in the report titled 'Social Farming and the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme'.

"SICAP allows for flexibility, so we could fund the individual clients. All the participants were placed on two farms in Co. Westmeath."

"They finished up with a day back in our office, after they'd done their training and their placements. It was a very enjoyable day for us."

"For 2019, we're expecting to run two to three more programmes - in relation to people with disabilities and refugees."

"We see great potential in it. We see it as something that key SICAP target groups can engage with and it's something I hope we can play an active role in over the coming years," he said.

\* Download the report here:  
<http://bit.ly/CI-SocFarmSICAP>





#EQUALITY V.

# TRAVELLERS STILL BEING TREATED AS IF THEY ARE HAVING TO HIDE THEIR IDENTITY

- My Morning with women from Offaly

BY RAY LUCEY

**W**hat a new world was opened up to me when on a mid-March morning I met with some female community health workers with the Offaly Traveller Movement (OTM) in Tullamore.

Only two short years ago the Irish State gave Travellers national recognition as an ethnic minority but it seems the reality in everyday living can be an entirely different thing.

After being warmly welcomed with coffee and some introductory conversation we discussed the real lives of Travellers and their issues in Ireland in 2019. So, I asked about the aforementioned recognition and what that actually meant to them today.

Mags Lovett, OTM Health Manager, says of this recognition, "It's better to get than not to get, but what does it mean?" Young children in school are encouraged to be proud of their Traveller origins but by the time they reach adulthood, they will almost certainly experience discrimination.

Eye-watering, savage cuts of 87% in 2011 to Traveller organisations has left the sector poorly resourced and as a result many essential services are not provided for within the community. I got the feeling from the women present that support from government departments for the Traveller community was somewhat patronising and tokenistic.

## 81% UNEMPLOYED

"I don't think they're really taking us seriously they're just funding us for the crack of it you know," says Lilly Kavanagh. During the group interview, Mags Lovett, Health Manager, Offaly Traveller Movement, presented to me some stark statistics that clearly illustrated the key areas that are crying out for urgent action:

- Traveller unemployment is 80% nationally, versus the 5.4% overall rate.
- Suicides amongst Travellers are 6 times the rate of the general population.
- Lower life expectancy (Traveller men live 15 years less and women 11.5 years less than the settled population).
- Higher infant mortality rates (3.5 times the rate for the general population).

Underlying this, I found the women hardened by decades of cruel discrimination and I could see the hurt in their faces as they revealed how it made them feel after such incidences. Often, discrimination occurred in public places.



• The women who hosted the visit by reporter Ray Lucey. Front row: Sarah McDonagh, Pinkie (Bridget) McNerney and Lilly Kavanagh. Back row: Geraldine Ward, Mags Lovett and Bridget McNerney.

PHOTO BY RAY LUCEY

"Everybody is looking at you... it makes you very low," they agreed.

In one incident that happened only recently, a bar worker blatantly declared, "You're not getting anything here, you're nothing but a pack of k\*\*\*\*\*s."

Some Travellers seeking service at a shop or a pub, for example, can be accused of previous misbehaviour and they have to counter these accusations often within the earshot of other customers who may know them.

## FUNERAL FRUSTRATION

Another issue is the complete closure of businesses in towns during Traveller funerals. Pinkie (Bridget) McNerney says that, years ago, this was not the case. She cited the example of her own mother's funeral when the streets of Birr were lined with people to pay their respects. Years later, she was utterly frustrated trying to locate a venue for her daughter's wedding, travelling far and wide and finding it was a futile exercise - even with the assistance of a wedding planner.

## WEDDING WOES

Often weddings can cost significantly more for Travellers. Sarah spoke about a wedding that was hit by an additional €4,000 charge for security (non-refundable). Other cases were cited of parties being refused entry to hotels on actual wedding days. They even recalled a phone call to a wedding party while in the church to say the reception could not go ahead at the booked venue.

Even with all the recent equality legislation, the women say business owners will often use indirect methods of discrimination to prevent Travellers accessing their services. Staff are trained to say such things as, "Locals only!" or "Private function" where in reality this is not the case; they are just excuses to deny Travellers entry. From her personal experiences Pinkie says, "I don't know if that equality thing is doing anything. No discrimination against Travellers? It's still there."

I asked the group of women questions about issues highlighted in the mainstream media presenting Travellers negatively.



# REALITY IN IRELAND

# TURNED AWAY & DENTISTRY IN 2019

## Offaly Traveller Movement

*"I could see the hurt in their faces as they revealed how it made them feel after such incidences. Often, discrimination occurred in public places."*

On domestic violence within the travelling community, I asked was it more prevalent?

"They say it's part of our culture, but it isn't - it's not a part of anyone's culture," Sarah says.

I raised the issue of people saying that Travellers don't pay tax.

"Sure they won't give us jobs to do anything," Pinkie says. (See above statistics for Traveller high unemployment rate).

Referring to those Travellers who are lucky enough to secure some employment, Pinkie says, "A few fellas are on the buildings, there are some women in projects like this, and some are self-employed. Plenty are willing to work, but to get a regular job, Travellers have to deny who they are."

## CHANGING SURNAMES

She says that in many cases Travellers have to change surnames to gain employment.

In 2019 Travellers are not part of a more inclusive society, Mags Lovett says, "There are changes to public policy and stuff but we're not seeing any changes."

Meeting this group in Tullamore, I learned a lot about Travellers' issues and culture. I enjoyed the banter, especially when they spoke Cant and I did not know what they saying - they found my wild guesses amusing! I look forward to meeting them again with their families at the 2019 Offaly Traveller Pride's event this June which both settled and Travellers celebrate together.

For more information, contact the Offaly Traveller Movement, Bury Quay, Tullamore Co. Offaly. T: 057-9352438. E: [info@otm.ie](mailto:info@otm.ie) W: [www.otm.ie](http://www.otm.ie) FB: [www.facebook.com/OffalyTravellerMovement](https://www.facebook.com/OffalyTravellerMovement)

• **PHOTOS (RIGHT):** Travellers added colour to this year's St. Patrick's Day Parade in Tullamore.



CHANGING IRELAND

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Contact the editor, Allen Meagher.  
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Traveller Dr. Sindy Joyce is among the new people appointed to the President's Council of State.

# NEWS: Recognition

## 2019 LAMA AWARDS WINNERS

The Community and Council Awards were presented by the Local Authorities Members Association (LAMA) at a gala event in Dublin on February 9th.

Since 2015, there has been a strong community emphasis to the awards.

The winners were presented with trophies by RTÉ's Marty Morrissey at a gala awards ceremony at Croke Park Stadium on Saturday 9th February 2019.

This year, there were 185 nominated projects and people going forward for 25 national awards. Over 400 people attended the event which has been running for 13 years.

### Community Volunteer of the Year

- Larry Magnier (Louth Co. Co.)
- Silver Award: Mindzenty Finnegan (Monaghan Co. Co.)

### Council of the Year

- Limerick City & County Council.

### Best Community Based Initiative

- 'The Best Years of Our Lives Have Yet to Come' project (Cavan Co. Co.)
- Silver Award: Athboy HUB (Meath Co. Co.)

### Best Community Health Initiative

- The MEDEX Programme (South Dublin Co. Co.)
- Silver Award: We're Breast Feeding Friendly Limerick (Limerick City & Co. Co.)

### Best Community Sports Team/Club

- Westport Leisure Park Running Club (Mayo Co. Co.)

### Best Business Working with the Community

- The Urban Co-op (Limerick City & Co. Co.)
- Silver Award: Ray of Sunshine After School (Wicklow County Services)

### Best Disability Access & Inclusion Initiative

- Louth Co. Co.'s Sports Inclusion Disability Programme
- Silver Award: The Mall Shared Space (Kerry Co. Co.)

### Best Arts/Culture

- Kenmare Halloween Howl (Kerry Co. Co.)
- Silver: Summer in Bray (Wicklow Co. Co.)

### Best Education/Training Initiative

- Riverwalk Cafe – Culinary Entrepreneurship (Wicklow Co. Co.)

### Best Environmental/Ecological Project

- The Derryvalley Catchment Project (Monaghan Co. Co.)
- Silver Award: Circular Ocean (Cork Co. Co.)

### Best Public Park

- St. Catherine's Park, Dublin 15 (Fingal Co. Co.)

### Best Social Housing Initiative

- Ó Cualann Co-housing Alliance, Baile na Laochra Co-operative Affordable Housing (Dublin City Co.)



• *This park - once a derelict spot in Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan - was restored through hundreds if not thousands of volunteer hours put in by Mindzenty Finnegan who was presented with a silver award at the gala event.*

- Silver Award: Tubber Hill housing Scheme (Mayo Co. Co.)

### Best Waste Management Programme

- www.repairmystuff.ie (Monaghan Co. Co.)
- Silver Award: Zero Waste (Tipp Co. Co.)

### Emergency Response Team of the Year

- Irish Community Rapid Response (Cork Co. Co.)

### Special Recognition Award

- Donegal Co. Co.'s response to flooding in Inishowen, August 2017

### Special Recognition Award (Individual)

- Denis Heffernan (Tipperary Co. Co.)

### National Impact Award

- Use Your Brain Not Your Fist (Leitrim Co. Co.)

### Best Social Enterprise of the Year

- MyMind (Dublin City Council)

### Grand Prix Award

- Sports Inclusion Disability Programme (Louth Co. Co.)

To see the full list of finalists: <http://lamaawards.org/2019-finalists/>

## OTHER CATEGORIES

There were also awards for Education Building, Tourism, Heritage, Attracting Investment, Smart Energy, Communications, and Corporate Social Responsibility.

These went to projects and initiatives in counties Cavan, Sligo, Galway, Kerry, Fingal, South Dublin and Kildare.

## SPONSORS

The awards were sponsored by IPB Insurance, An Post, Healthy Ireland, GeoDirectory, Repak, the Social Innovation Fund, IPB Insurance and Fáilte Ireland.

## 2 for U

## SOCIAL INCLUSION FORUM 2019 - AVIVA, DUBLIN

The theme for this year's Social Inclusion Forum (SIF) in the Aviva Stadium, Dublin, on May 22nd, is 'Collaborative Working at Local and National Level'.

The SIF was put in place by the Government to support the development and implementation of its plans to address poverty and social inclusion.

This year, participants will discuss: Social Inclusion at Community Level – enhancing collaboration; Getting more from data; Social inclusion and people with disabilities; Housing and social inclusion; The role of employers in social inclusion; and Traveller Health and Wellbeing. They will also look at the new social inclusion strategy for 2019-2025.

Contact the European Anti-Poverty Network or Community Work Ireland for more details. No charge for attending.

W: [communityworkireland.ie](http://communityworkireland.ie) & [eapn.ie](http://eapn.ie)



## FAMILY-FRIENDLY FESTIVAL FOR CHANGE - CLOUGHJORDAN

If it's change you're looking for, fun and a family-friendly atmosphere, head to Tipp!

Cultivate is holding a one-day, 'Elements of Change' event on Saturday, June 29th, in Cloughjordan.

It promises a "festival to reimagine our future to sustain happier, healthier communities".

Transitions Towns pioneer Rob Hopkins will be one of the lead voices. He said, "If we wait for the governments, it'll be too little, too late; if we act as individuals, it'll be too little; but if we act as communities, it might just be enough, just in time."

Not one for the shy or retiring, attendees are encouraged to "be part of the discussions, offer a workshop, let your children inspire you with their own programme, bring an instrument, get involved in a meitheal, host your own conversation cafe, mingle and share your insights!"

Encouraging people to come by train, the organisers have scheduled their programme to match Iarnród Éireann's timetable.

You can still drive of course - just leave the Hummer at home!

Tickets: from €10 to €35.

More info: <http://cultivate.ie>





## ON THE GROUND

# "He used only to paint using black paint - Now he paints in colour"

## €46m community programme proves worth on canvas

Sandy Holland is a community development worker employed by Breffini Integrated working with communities in Co. Cavan.

In February, he told about a project they support in Cavan Town and Virginia, backed by SICAP funding, which is making a big difference in the quality of life of a small number of people with disabilities.

It began in 2016 when Breffini Integrated helped to set up the Cavan Disability Network - a collective of disabled people and carers.

"One of the Network's priorities was to do something (with SICAP support) about the fact that there were limited activities for adults with disabilities," said Mr. Holland.

They entered a partnership with the local day centres and sourced a feasibility grant of €5,000 from the Children and Young People's Services Committee.

In 2017, they began holding art workshops facilitated by an art therapist as, as the year progressed, a drama and musical theatre facilitator joined the team.

With support, Cavan Disability Network applied for further funding and secured another €8,000 from the National Lottery.

## TRUST GREW

In 2018, they sought to adapt and learn.

"Trust had grown between the project organisers, care staff, workshop facilitators and the participants. More people joined the workshops and they held a public exhibition of their artwork," said Mr. Holland.

Also last year, massage therapies were introduced and had a "significant" impact. The project also bought musical instruments.

Pointing out that any project's impact is magnified when organisations combine resources, Mr. Holland highlighted "amazing" input by care staff in supporting and encouraging nervous participants to engage in activities for the first time.

The workshop facilitators - whom he called "incredible assets" - were willing to adapt to plans that changed as they went along.

Meanwhile, the HSE found that, as a direct result of people with disabilities participating in the new activities, the health goals the HSE set out in care plans were surpassed.

There are of course challenges. For instance, the funding goes up and down and does



• Development worker, Sandy Holland (above, right and below, left) with others involved in the project. The picture below includes arts facilitator, Kim Doherty (on right).

not always arrive when expected, causing administrative headaches.

Mr. Holland called on people to look at the impact to date for participants:

- They're enjoying of the activities.
- They're involved in directing the activities and are producing credit-worthy artwork and drama.
- The participants went to places they had no experience of, for example, The Ramor Theatre.

- They exhibited their artwork in a proper venue, had their work publicly acknowledged.

As Mr. Holland put it about the progress of one participant, "He used only to paint using black paint - now he paints in colour."

The personal achievements by the participants in turn inspired the various programme partners to want to keep investing in this fabulous project.



# SICAP: Case-Studies

## PEOPLE AS PROOF

# COMMUNITY WORKERS GIVEN STAGE TO TELL THEIR STORIES

*- Regional seminars hear convincing evidence*

Story-telling in the Community and Voluntary Sector is growing wings.

One of the main funders - the Department of Rural and Community Development - is encouraging groups to share their stories with the public.

Powerful regional case-study presentations were made during the Springtime and they should help shape opinion and policy as they get a wider hearing. They focused on community groups and individuals whose life-chances are now improving.

The story-telling initiative is welcome. Most community groups have consistently ranked PR as being one of their top five priorities, but rarely get around to it.

The community sector was encouraged for years by funders - usually the State - to concentrate on statistically provable outcomes. They now increasingly recognise the power also of telling stories.

To their credit, Oxfam discovered this years ago - statistics don't lie, but they don't move people to act the same way stories of individuals can. You probably remember the name Alan Kurdi, but do you know how many people drowned when the most

recent boat sank crossing the Mediterranean? As humans we relate to stories about each other better than we do to statistics.

Today, in a world of hate and consumerism and love and courage (hello Ruairí McKiernan), it's only right to bombard people with our own stories.

Yes, the existence of a need for community development automatically implies that something is lacking in the first place - fairly paid employment, health, sobriety, fair play or financial wellbeing.

No government wants to hear talk of poverty, unemployment or drugs.

But our stories are about highlighting what needs to be done and what is being done on the ground. In one word, solutions. We also never put spin on our stories.

We will feature some of the SICAP case-studies in particular in upcoming editions. If you want coverage, call us.

And get the news out on community radio!

- AM



• Everyone has a story. "SICAP is hard to explain in a sentence, in a soundbite. Case studies are a means to tell our story better," said Paul Geraghty.

In Ireland's community & voluntary sector, only 0.8% of so, you might say! In the overall Irish workforce, 13% are

employees are classed as 'highly paid'. Rightly 'highly paid'. (Benefacts 2019)



# SICAP: Case-Studies

## TRUE STORIES

# 3 valuable projects from Clonakilty to Waterford



• *We love community work! Above & left: On Valentine's Day, development workers, local authority staff and civil servants met to share stories - through case-studies - at a seminar held in Limerick.*

**T**here are ample statistics to prove the case for further funding for communities, but now compelling real-life stories are being highlighted to make a hurricane-strength case for more resources nationally for communities.

In February - on Valentine's Day no less - 'Changing Ireland' met passionate people engaged in empowering communities in Waterford city, Limerick city and Clonakilty, Co. Cork. Some of the groups they work with are very vulnerable.

## WATERFORD

The Sudanese community in Waterford, including females, receive ongoing support. Waterford Area Partnership gave a superb account of this work engaging members of the Sudanese community. Sudanese society is much more patriarchal and diplomacy and respect was central to this work.

## WEST CORK

In Clonakilty, where there were numerous hotels and tourism attractions, there was no community centre. Now, they have one.

West Cork Development Partnership took - no surprise - a community development approach to setting up a community centre

in Clonakilty and that's what made it work. Townspeople really got behind the project and gave even more donations than were needed. The centre is now open.

## LIMERICK

In Limerick, people learned how to improve their wellbeing and mental health. It was life-transforming for participants and their communities.

This case-study aptly demonstrated SICAP's impact. The PAUL Partnership developed a 'Wellness Recovery Action Plan' for people across the city. Called 'WRAP' (not to be confused with rap - as some thought) all the events held were oversubscribed.

These community initiatives were presented as detailed case-studies and we look forward to visiting many of these projects to find out more and hear it from the horse's mouth.

The case-studies event, organised by Pobal and the Department of Rural and Community Development, was one of four to take place nationally. The aim - to increase awareness of the true positive impact of interventions funded through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP).

Hopefully, the people with the purse-strings will hear the stories.

## NEW SICAP REPORT CALLS FOR BOTTOM-UP APPROACH TO EVALUATION

A new 108-page report on the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) was published in February.

'Valuing Community Development through (SICAP) 2015-2017: Towards a Framework for Evaluation' sheds light on whether community development can be evaluated and aims to determine how that evaluation could feasibly be carried out.

Based on extensive research and a series of consultation workshops, the ESRI report concludes that evaluation of SICAP-supported initiatives is challenging not least because most communities draw on multiple funding sources, making it difficult to isolate impact from one particular income stream.

Nevertheless, the report detailed "a strong willingness on the part of [local community workers], members of [local community groups] and other key policy stakeholders to implement methods that are appropriate both for the interests of marginalised communities and groups, and for the needs of the state and other funders".

A number of solutions were suggested:

- generating a framework that would focus on the capacity of local groups to influence change on a community level
- the introduction of self-assessment through a distance-travelled tool similar to that used by Pobal
- drawing good practice approaches from analysis of thematic reports, focusing on the specific impacts of funding on particular target groups

According to the report, "such qualitative approaches allow for a more systematic and in-depth analysis of the impact of SICAP on community-level outcomes".

The report was funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development and carried out by the Economic and Social Research Institute. It was written by Adele Whelan, Seamus McGuinness and Judith Delaney.

Download from: [esri.ie](http://esri.ie)



Social Inclusion  
& Community  
Activation  
Programme

# OPINION: The view from Listowel

## Story-telling is nothing new to communities

- Why does community development and social inclusion work have to continually justify its existence?

ROBERT CAREY WRITES

The recent regional SICAP<sup>(1)</sup> meetings, highlighting the impact of our work on people's lives through case studies, is welcome. Equally, the idea that we need to publicise the work of the programme cannot be disputed.

But, this emphasis on qualitative assessment is not new. It was a big part of the social inclusion programme in the 1990s and early 2000s. We share our learning and when numbers are made flesh to reveal the humanity of the work - that's the value of it.

The Department of Rural and Community Development's idea that we need to sell the benefits of the programme is not new either. Paradoxically, it was the primary justification for the move towards greater quantitative assessment which culminated in the emergence of the IRIS<sup>(2)</sup> data system. The argument, with some justification, was that the funders needed hard data to appreciate the impact of the social inclusion and community development work and that at that time the systems to support the harvesting of this data were not robust enough.

### THIS GOES BACK TO THE 1980s

While it is vital that we take responsibility for the promotion of the programme, SICAP is but another episode in a series of community development social inclusion type programmes stretching back to the 1980s. The programmes have changed over the years, including the introduction of privatisation in the form of tendering, but the focus remains much the same.

So, why does community development and social inclusion work have to perennially justify its existence? After all, both are internationally-agreed, evidence-based concepts.

The concept of social inclusion was first used in France and has long been part of EU and national policy. Community development is recognised internationally as playing "a crucial role in supporting active democratic life by promoting the autonomous voice of the disadvantaged and vulnerable communities"<sup>(3)</sup>.

Maybe it is because the very existence of such programmes

*"As a sector, we have become so adept at pleasing the funders... that we are in danger of losing the essence of what we do and thus the ability to communicate it."*

shows that the existing systems of governance are unsatisfactory in meeting peoples' needs. This, and the fact that the people the programme seeks to support (its target groups) are poorly represented in the establishment, means that those in power may despite their best efforts lack real understanding of certain issues. For example, if you haven't had a housing issue, or if you are a landlord, you have a different perspective from someone who has lost their house, is homeless or struggling to keep their house. This is human nature.

Another reason may be the inflated expectations around community development programmes such as SICAP. Essentially, LDCs<sup>(4)</sup> implement the programme which, though important, is modestly endowed in terms of resources and is operating within an overall liberal market economic system which has seen inequality increasing and access to basic services decline. Yet, in many LCDC<sup>(5)</sup> areas, the only social inclusion impacts being measured are those delivered

by SICAP despite there being a myriad of other agencies who also deliver services that impact on inclusion.

The key difference SICAP can claim is that it is a community development programme and as such this brings with it certain characteristics in approach and substance, such as its emphasis on empowerment, social justice and supporting progressive activism.

### WE TOO BEAR RESPONSIBILITY

This brings us to my final reason why the sector has not become fully accepted. Here, we bear some responsibility.

As a sector, we have become so adept at pleasing the funders and various bodies to whom we report to - using corporate language and methodologies - that we are in danger of losing the essence of what we do and thus the ability to communicate it.

Recently, I was with a group advocating for services in

their area. They wanted to communicate their message in a way that would resonate with decision makers.

A member suggested that they tell the stories about the people who had been helped to date, and how the supports provided were essential to improving their lives.

"Talk about the people?! They won't be interested in people - what we need are facts and statistics."

### OUR OWN VALUES

So, the group settled on using both approaches, but it was typical of the approach we have all internalised. The sector has become like a vassal state which adopts the values of the parent state and loses its sense of self.

We who work in and support the sector need be clear of our own values and the values of community development and social inclusion work. We need to take every opportunity to communicate them in dialogue with other stakeholders, but do so without self-censorship. We must be willing to speak truth to power in support of groups or social exclusion issues, and by being confident in our own skins.

I say this because now, while we are between recessions, is the very time we need to make the case for investment in social inclusion and community development work in order to help strengthen the foundations for social cohesion and inclusion.

### GLOSSARY

(1) SICAP = Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme.

(2) IRIS = Under SICAP, community workers must gather information from and about individuals and groups they work with. Once combined, it provides a demographic profile (poverty index, age, gender) of participants locally and nationally and of support outcomes.

(3) The International Association for Community Development - Yaounde Declaration Conference 2005.

(4) LDCs = Local Development Companies.

(5) LCDCs = Local Community Development Committees.



• Red Rhino kickboxing club in Tallaght received support from South Dublin County Partnership. There are many approaches to community development.



Previous  
opinion pieces  
by Robert  
Carey



• Robert Carey is the Area and Programme Manager with North East & West Kerry Development. He writes here in a private capacity.

February, 2017

## **‘Trump’s election a catalyst for community development’**

W: <http://bit.ly/CI-RC-Trump>

December, 2013

## **‘Programme has seen more reincarnations than ‘Dr Who!’**

- What next for the Local and Community Development Programme?

W: <http://www.changingireland.ie/Issue44.pdf> (page 13)

October, 2013

## **‘Zen and the Art of Local development’**

W: <http://bit.ly/CI-RC-localzen>

### **Indecon Report**

## **High placement rate by Local Employment Services nationally**

- Northside Partnership “immensely proud”



*The positive findings about the work done by Local Employment Services was welcomed by staff in Northside Partnership. LES offices provide a valuable service to that the government is currently looking at closely. Marie Price-Bolger raised concerns about what the future might hold in a recent speech (see page 14).*

National research commissioned by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection found that the not-for-profit Local Employment Service (LES) is successful in achieving full-time employment placement for 28.8% of those referred to them annually.

The research was conducted by Indecon International Economic Consultants and was published in February.

It found a very high proportion of LES clients nationally “indicated that their attendance with a Local Employment Service had been beneficial, with 75% stating that their engagement had motivated them to find work or to undertake further education or training.”

Nationally, the service also received significant

endorsement from employers, with 89% indicating that the LES had helped them to find suitable candidates for jobs. Also, 83% of employers who engaged with LES and responded to the researchers said it provided an efficient recruitment service for their organisation.

Northside Partnership was particularly pleased because the data “highlighted that the LES operated by Northside Partnership in Coolock and Kilbarrack is one of the most successful in the state with over 40% of job-seeking participants progressing into employment in 2016”.

“As a non-profit organisation we are immensely proud of this achievement,” said the board of Northside Partnership in a statement.

Read the full report: <http://bit.ly/LES-Indecon>

## **National network welcomes report**

The Irish Local Development Network (ILDN) welcomed the findings (see above) of the Indecon report into LES.

“Placing almost 30% of referrals into full-time employment is a significant achievement, but it must also be recognised that for many of the today’s jobseekers, progression to a part-time job, internship, employment scheme or further training are valid pathways to full-time employment and career development.

“At this time of welcome falls in unemployment, there are still many who need significant support to achieve job-readiness and access the labour market. We work intensively with these people in their local community,

helping them to address any barriers to employment including skills needs, mental health issues, self-esteem and personal discipline.

“The cost per full-time employment placement is €2544 and this reduces significantly when part-time positions are taken into account. The savings to the state in welfare payments as well as the transfer to the state in new tax income are considerable,” said the ILDN.

The ILDN represents Ireland’s 49 Local Development Companies, many of whom deliver the Local Employment Service on behalf of the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection (DEASP).

### **BACKGROUND**

The DEASP provides a nationwide Public Employment Service. It is delivered either by the Department’s own Intreo service, or by community-based, not-for-profit companies operating the Local Employment Service (LES) and Jobs Clubs, or by private contractors through Jobpath.



## WE DON'T NEED ONE VOICE -

### - Rural debate on RTÉ's 'Late Late' was a c

- Pat Spillane raised serious issues, but skipped over positives in 18-min
- The RTÉ sports pundit & former rural 'ambassador' was biting, funny
- Minister Ring would have joined discussion; he criticised RTE

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

**K**erry football legend and sports pundit Pat Spillane appeared on RTÉ's 'The Late Late' recently to talk about rural Ireland. He was critical of work by the Department of Rural and Community Development, in particular a nationwide weekend-long initiative called 'The Big Hello' (held over the long weekend in May). He implied it was a waste of money when rural communities are facing big challenges.

Editor Allen Meagher was among the 650,000 viewers (weekly average) who watched the show.

The Department of Rural and Community Development has a budget of close to €300m this year. While it is sadly the lowest of all departments, that figure shot up 27% on last year.

Yet, an irate Pat Spillane - appearing on RTE's Late Late Show on April 19th - focused venom in particular on a minor initiative costing €0.3m and being tried for the first time by the Department.

'The Big Hello's aim was to bring communities together over a weekend, nationwide. It never promised to cure poverty and inequality, tackle climate change and topple the elite. It simply sought to encourage people to get together at community level and it was for both urban and rural communities.

"Motherhood and apple pie... gobbledegook," Spillane called it and worse.

To hear him mouth off about it - he was funny at times - you'd think 'The Big Hello' was the be-all and end-all of what the Department does.

'The Big Hello' will cost 0.1% of the Department's budget by year's end. (Further funding to communities also comes from other departments).

For a national event with a potential reach into thousands of communities, spending €0.3m was surely worth a try. (Over 800 events were held nationwide through the initiative, the Department reported).

Lessons will be learned to make 'The Big Hello' even better if held again next year. Responses already coming into 'Changing Ireland' from community development workers



- One outcome from Spillane's "passionate/not angry" tirade was that many people got to hear about 'The Big Hello' initiative. Over 800 events were funded.

suggest that:

- As it partly aims to tackle isolation, holding the event either in October or November (when suicide rate rises) might be better.

- Perhaps, it should be held on an ordinary weekend, as many people already have plans for long weekends.

- Communities shouldn't be confined to holding it on one specific weekend.

Leaving aside his personal grievances, Spillane made fair points on a wider level about rural Ireland's absolute need to offer more employment and to retain shops, post offices and so on.

"If you want to tackle isolation and tackle loneliness and invigorate communities, well make an effort to keep the shop open, make an effort not to close the post office, and to keep the doctor's surgery open."

He said he was very passionate about rural Ireland. "And if I am angry about it, I make no apologies about it."

He said that "grants are great, but grants are short term, sticking-plaster solutions."

Reaction on social media suggests that Spillane, while not saying anything new, expressed the dismay many people in rural Ireland feel.

He said, "If I was being a cynic - (I'd) say a big hello to the shopkeeper before he closes his door for good. Say a big hello to the postmaster before the post office closes..."

He exaggerated, but it worked to get the points across. Yes, we have Garda checkpoints galore, but fewer Garda stations to call to when in need.

We have poor or no broadband - which he didn't mention - in many rural areas.

Hundreds of shops are gone from towns and villages. The Department will of course point to the growing success of its Town and Village Renewal Scheme (€53m spent to date supporting 675 projects). Yet, the number of community shops in Ireland - highlighted in our previous edition - stands at less than ten.

Of 159 appeals to An Post not to shut post



tuned in

# WE NEED MANY

## one-man show

ute appearance  
and cynical



Big Hello' and the €10,000 in grants to each local

offices, only four were successful. To be fair, that is outside the Department's brief and the Government shoulders collective responsibility for their demise. Or is EU competition law to blame? Either way, communities have lost out.

On the other hand, I heard no mention on the 'Late Late' about libraries expanding to become community hubs, of the gratitude from community groups for the grant schemes dismissed by Spillane as "sticking plasters". Nothing about the rollout of LEADER funding.

Elections are coming and Spillane claimed that's why he was speaking out, that election-time was the best time to highlight issues facing rural Ireland.

He made some good points, but passed up on the opportunity to say something inspiring on a premier show. He had the stage to himself (bar Tubridy).

"Why can't we bring jobs to rural Ireland?" he asked. He said there were some "really good projects" but didn't tell us about any of them.

So, we didn't hear on the 'Late Late' about the thousands of jobs created in both rural and urban areas going back almost a decade through community programmes supported by the Department. We didn't hear about social enterprise coming into its own. Or of initiatives to support people with disabilities that combat isolation.

Meanwhile, away from the tv screens, community groups are becoming their own ambassadors. They've developed their own voice - where the structures are working (in most counties) - through Public Participation Networks.

Local projects are becoming story-telling ambassadors to highlight what's working for individuals and in communities. They are being actively encouraged to do this.

Almost all the targets set under the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme have been surpassed and we're now starting to hear from the people previously represented in those statistics.

Oxfam researchers have proven that the general public cannot easily relate to big figures, but when combined with an individual's story it can have an impact. The two together are more likely to benefit society by influencing policy makers.

This is the way to go. It's not one or two voices shouting loudly that impresses; it's many speaking as one, or similarly.

Furthermore, empowering people to engage in collective action and speak up is important in community development. The Department under Minister Ring is to be applauded for recognising this.

So, let's see more support for community development workers to plug into what their communities are saying, to support workers to network at county level, to collaborate and speak out nationally. If they employ humour, show passion and claim to have been wronged, Tubridy might even have 'a big hello' for them on stage!

**NOTE:** For the record (also see pages 2-3) 'Changing Ireland' magazine - based in Moyross, Limerick, and managed by a voluntary board - is independent. We receive core-funding from the Department mentioned in this article and do not shy from providing a platform ourselves for writers to express healthy criticism.

Our journalism is focused on communities, on community development and on social inclusion.

## **BALLINA: RING HIGHLIGHTS PROGRAMMES & STAFF CONTRIBUTION**

Minister Michael Ring gave a spirited talk on his still new Department's achievements on April 25th when addressing volunteers from across Mayo and locally-based civil servants.

He said that his department - which will be two years old in June - was "committed to making the lives of people in rural and urban Ireland better".

Speaking in Ballina, where 100 staff from the Department of Rural and Community Development are based, he pointed to schemes and programmes - many new - that communities can now turn to for support.

The Department has expanded quickly and the 'Helping Hands' event - which the minister opened - was held to update volunteers about those new supports and funding.

Minister Ring listed the nationwide impact of the programmes - for example, the Community Services Programme, SICAP, LEADER and the Inner City Dublin programme. (See full list on previous page).

He outlined the funding levels and national impact. For instance, the Outdoor Recreation Scheme, with €41m, is supporting 600 projects. Similarly, through Clár's €25m programme, 1,270 projects have been supported.

The Minister emphasised "how valuable they are to both urban and rural Ireland".

"Don't forget, we have problems in urban Ireland, we have problems in rural Ireland, and we have to look at them and we have to support them and give them the help that they need," he said.

Looking back, he said: "Remember this: it's not easy to set up a government department. It's not easy for the staff, it's not easy for the minister, and it's not easy for all the officials that are involved in it.

"Every other minister that was appointed on that day walked into a secretary general, walked into a department - we had to go through the Dáil, bring the legislation in. Then we had to set up the staff, secretary or assistant secretary, all the staff that are working here and in Dublin.

"And I want to say this tonight: to all the staff in the Department of Rural and Community Development, thank you for the great work that you're doing. I'm very proud of you and I want to say this publicly tonight: you do an excellent job."

- AM

# THE RURAL COMMUNITY OF THE FUTURE

*- John B. Keane would have been amused by 'Smart Towns and Villages'*



By Pat Kennedy, eTownz

be smart.

He wrote about ordinary country people and their curiosity about each other, and about their cunning, cleverness and contrariness, especially when cornered by institutions or moved by circumstances beyond their control.

Often, his characters struggled to get accurate information.

Now, the EU through government and local development structures are talking about 'Smart Towns and Villages' in the near future. So, what changes might come? Will some villages end up 'smart', and others not?

Already, we're a long way from peeking out the window to see what's going on. Notwithstanding broadband connectivity issues, technology is changing society at a rapid pace.

So, what will the future look like? Let's imagine living in one of Ireland's 'smart' rural villages in five or ten years time.

The 'Smart Towns and Villages' concept probably stemmed from success with 'Smart Cities' which focused on technologically-integrated infrastructure such as smart traffic lights and street lights.

So, Smart Towns and Villages will mean better-connected, more efficient communities, and people who understand their communities better through metrics.

This would mean - in theory - that a community can make more informed decisions and more people can participate in the decision-making.

Going "back to the future", it could look like this:

- You can pay for local club membership and enter the local GAA lottery through an online community platform.
- While there are already less physical shops, picture local businesses selling

products and services through an online local marketplace.

- Menial tasks that put people off from volunteering will be automated and digitised, giving people more time to work together and take action. Voluntary management structures can be more easily formalised.

- Dashboards of metrics related to the local environment and business will help locals understand their community's needs better.

- New projects will be carefully task listed and people from across the community and provide pinpoint help

- Local online volunteers will become a valued asset to the community. Those skills your children are picking up playing 'Fortnight' could yet be used to great advantage, in online local volunteering

- Low administration micro-financing can be easily facilitated, for example to book a room for a meeting.

- The process for grant applications will be simpler.

- Blockchain will allow local currencies to become more common, something that the late Richard Douthwaite, ecologist and radical economist, always hoped for.

- Smart towns and villages might even end up teaching smart cities a thing or two.

Who knows where the Internet-Of-Things (IOT) and 5G are going take us.

Our bins already always know where they are at all times of the day or night (they're geo-tagged).

John B would have found it fascinating.



John B. Keane



## BRIEFS

### IRISH WANT CLASS DISCRIMINATION RECOGNISED

Irish young people have been campaigning for class discrimination to be legally recognized.

All Together in Dignity (ATD) Ireland supported eight young delegates to take part in the 'European Fourth World Peoples University', held at the European Parliament in February.

Armed with ADT research, the group argued that not having socio-economic deprivation recognised in Irish law as a ground for discrimination has had a negative impact on people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

"At present, within Irish law, there are nine recognised grounds of discrimination, but we are working to try and add a tenth ground, one based on a person's socioeconomic status," said the group.

The campaign continues.

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

### TRAVELLER SELINA O'LEARY'S SIBERIAN EXPERIENCE



Traveller and singer Selina O'Leary, 27, from Carlow, flew to Siberia recently to live with a nomadic tribe of reindeer-herders for 10 days.

While she wasn't gone on the raw fish diet, she made a real connection with the family who hosted her in the Siberian Tundra in Northern Russia.

Selina went as part of 'Traveller's Guide', a two-part RTÉ documentary in which she and another Irish Traveller left home to experience day-to-day life and culture in other nomadic communities. The show was broadcast on RTÉ 1 in March.

She said she would "go back again in half a heartbeat" to the Nenets tribe. They lived lives far from services we take for granted, but were generally much healthier than us.