

CHANGING IRELAND

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

People with the right hattitude succeed!

Margaret one of
1,700 people
supported to
start a small
business



ALSO INSIDE:

People vote on €15m budget (aka participatory budgeting)

Bottom-up approach
needed for climate
change



Time for 'pub hubs'



Voices of inclusion



This publication is produced by Changing Ireland Community Media CLG, an independent, not-for-profit NGO funded through the Department of Rural and Community Development.



Awards for new business start-ups

CLARE'S MARGARET O'CONNOR - A WINNER WITH *HATTITUDE*

Fans range from Finbar Furey to Lady Gaga & British royals

INTERVIEW BY RAY LUCEY

A thrilled Margaret O'Connor from ACo. Clare was still taking in the news that she had won the 2019 ILDN National Enterprise Awards when 'Changing Ireland' spoke to her.

She really hadn't expected to win outright having entered other competitions in which her hopes were dashed.

"It's really nice to win because I am representing the girls and the boys who are from farming backgrounds and isolated areas who want to do creative things," she said. "I am just so surprised, it's nice to be recognised in your own country."

All of the 17 finalists had inspirational stories, but Margaret's stood out.

As people gathered all around to congratulate her, she told us how she set up her own company when she went on the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) scheme.

"Moving home from London was a massive step, coming from the hustle and bustle to rural Ireland. Sometimes it's very difficult to take the plunge and, without Clare Local Development, I probably wouldn't have done it."

"There was a gap in the market (here) and Clare Local Development saw that and that's why they gave

me the opportunity to do the Back to Work Scheme," she said. "If it wasn't for the scheme I wouldn't be here. I'm so grateful for it," she said.

Margaret (33) began her designer career at the tender age of 11 by making little woollen men with tiny hurleys and helmets.

"I was really into Clare hurling," she said.

As an adult, she spent years studying and working abroad before becoming a success at home. Based in London, she made a name for herself. For instance, she worked with Philip Treacy, also a hat-maker, in preparation for a British royal wedding in 2011.

"I studied in Kensington and Chelsea and got my millinery papers. I really grafted though for a long eight years," she said.

She was trained by some of the leading lights of the millinery industry such as Yvette Jelfs, Kristen Scott and Sarah Cant. She recalled "working with Noel Stewart during London Fashion Week doing all the high end stuff".

Years earlier, she studied sculpture and painting, but made a career decision after seeing an exhibition by Philip Treacy: "After that I had the



• Award winner: Margaret O'Connor with Minister Regina Doherty.

lust for making hats."

"I was constantly trying to hone my craft and trying to have my own voice. It's great working for big designers, but you have to have your own story."

With the BTWEA, she opened her own shop in Ennis two years ago. She hopes her award will "encourage other young people like me".

A major milestone in Margaret's career was when Lady Gaga wore one of her creations. Finbar Furey is also a fan. This happened shortly after a period of setbacks and Margaret truly believes that "sometimes a knock can be good. I think it makes you more determined to prove everyone wrong."

(For more, see pages 5-7)



• Excitement after years of hard work: ILDN National Enterprise Award nominees on stage in Tullamore, in May.

PHOTOS BY: ALLEN MEAGHER

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 4 for information about the team behind 'Changing Ireland'.

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Tuaithe agus Pobail
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• *Main cover photo courtesy of ILDN. Shot by: Barry Cronin.*



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SERIOUSLY, HOW'S IT GOING?

If YOU value what we do, tell us how we're doing. Win €50*

**'GO ON, GO ON,
GO ON, GO ON!'**

**Influence 'Changing
Ireland's coverage by
doing our survey.**

**5-7 minutes.
(10 quick questions).**

W: bit.ly/magsurvey2019

** Most constructive
feedback wins €50
or a cup of tea -
you choose.*



Dark clouds of climate change DO have a silver lining!



Every dark cloud has a silver lining and the threat of climate change could see the rebirth of strong forces for community development.

At least in Ireland.

Here, after witnessing some years of growth in the Community Sector in the early 2000s, followed by almost a decade of cuts, it is a joy to read in a government report about the need once again for community leadership, engagement, initiative and resilience.

Resources are going to be invested in community outreach as one of the many actions in the Climate Action Plan. For a time, outreach was almost a dirty word.

Funding by government for community development may even turn full circle. This time, we could emerge stronger with technology in our hands that can be turned to community advantage, as Ireland reaches for a low-carbon future. Living locally is the best way to live anyway, connecting with the folk around you and looking out for each other.

Just ask Margaret O'Connor from Co. Clare who returned from London to build a career here instead. Her success in the ILDN National Enterprise Awards and the success of thousands of small local businesses she represented is very important now in an era where we seek to build resilient local communities.

Speaking of London, if Thatcherism threatened to slowly turn us into individualist zombies, climate change promises to bring us back together as communities.

Since it was established in 2017, the Department of Rural and Community Development has been working to strengthen communities, to support town and village development, to encourage local innovation and protect vulnerable urban and other communities. It is the smallest government department in terms of funding, but it is most fortunate it was set up given the tasks ahead of us due to climate change.

Now, give it wings!

Of course, with hindsight, it is also a pity that governments shut down good projects since 2002. We've a lot of capacity building to catch up on.

It isn't easy: Many community groups are focused on supporting people day-to-day. All are pressed for time. Changes that cost money take longer (including moving from the plastic sleeves we use to deliver this magazine to many readers). Yet, we know what is at stake.

Sometimes though, what is simple is true. For example, since we want to empower communities and make them attractive places to live and work in, we should consider 'pub hubs' (see back page).

Digihubs in pubs in communities across the country could work. The less we commute, the less damage we do to the environment, but there is so much added value. Picture thousands more people using pub hubs on the extended and expanded Back to Work Enterprise Allowance scheme and life restored to town and village centres.

Climate change may be just what it takes to bring us back to basics, back to our communities and back to life.

See you in a pub hub!

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

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ENTERPRISE AWARDS

Business success with support

BY RAY LUCEY

There are currently 6,500 people receiving support through two schemes to help people who were unemployed to set up small businesses. It's a really good scheme, everyone agrees.

On May 16th, the best 17 businesses displayed their wares in Tullamore, Co. Offaly, for awards linked to the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) and the Short Term Enterprise Allowance scheme (STEA).

BABY CLOTHES FOR EU

The founder of Ky Ky Kids, **Sharon McDermott** from Cork, set up her business in 2016 after over two decades living in Turkey.

It's name, Ky Ky Kids, originated from mispronunciation of her son Kaya's name. She began with bedding for children and has grown her business to include the design and manufacture of baby clothing and gifts.

Returning to Ireland, she found officialdom difficult, judgemental and frequently insensitive. She had run shops in Turkey, so she had business experience. However, it was not until she met **Tony O'Regan**, enterprise officer with Cork City Partnership, that she felt truly supported.

"I went to his office and I actually felt human. She said the BTWEA provided "a little support that meant so much" and it went towards paying "part of the mortgage or the petrol" while she set up her business. Today, her product line is available through retailers in Ireland, Britain and mainland Europe.

Sharon said, "As a finalist, it's lovely to be recognised and honoured by your peers. Everyone has a story and life isn't wonderful for everybody all the time. We all need community and now I appreciate that so much."

"It's lovely to meet like-minded people who have gone along the same journey because it's not easy," she said.

Mr O'Regan, who accompanied Sharon to Tullamore, said, "These awards recognise the efforts and the input from people who have started a business. They recognise their endeavours and achievements."

BABY STEALS THE SHOW

One of the Border Region finalists, **Rachael McCabe**, stole the show with the birth of her



• **LEFT:** Rachel McCabe at her stall and (inset) receiving an award from Minister Regina Doherty.
• **RIGHT:** Ms McCabe with her two-day old baby, absolutely the youngest person at the awards.



third daughter, Phoebe, two days before the ILDN Awards.

She was determined not to miss the event and her passion and drive for her 'Sound in Motion' music school was clearly evident.

Rachael was a lone parent and part-time music teacher, but she always had an ambition to become self-employed. She approached Breffni Integrated Development and they helped her draw up a business plan.

Rachel agreed with Sharon McDermott that the BTWEA provided a "really good security blanket".

She converted her garage into a purpose-built studio and all was going well for her by the third year. Today, she and a team of five tutors teach music and mindfulness from the studio.

AWARD FOR COUPLE WITH SPECIALISED GLASSES

Sacha Cahill, who is in the eyewear business with her partner Daniel Nugent, said that "starting a business with a young baby is really risky, but the BTWEA gave us the reassurance that we could actually do it."

Their company, Ambr Eyewear, is serving a new market in Ireland from their base in Dun Laoghaire.

"Our computer glasses block the blue light from digital devices - any laptop, phone or television screen. The blue light is bad for your eyes. It gives you headaches, sore eyes, blurred vision and stops your body producing melatonin (sleep inducing hormone) so you can't get to sleep as easy. When you wear the glasses you're protected from all those side-effects."

"The lens are baked with a pigment that block the blue light.

"There's a big company doing this in America, there are two in Europe and two in Australia. It's very new in Ireland, but it's going to be huge," she said.

If interested in protecting your eyesight, Ambr Eyewear point out that they can supply to anywhere in Ireland. (W: ambreyewear.com).

The **Irish Local Development Network (ILDN)** organised the national awards which followed regional rounds. The ILDN is the umbrella organisation for the Local Development Companies that support the businesses.



• **LEFT:** Sharon McDermott, owner of Ky Ky Kids, with Tony O'Regan, enterprise officer with Cork City Partnership.
• **RIGHT:** Ms McDermott explains her business to Minister Regina Doherty.



PHOTOS BY: RAY LUCEY & ALLEN MEAGHER

"What difference is one more plastic bottle going to make?" ask seven-billion people.

BACK TO WORK: National Enterprise A

There's value for all in supporting



• Annette Cahill, Cormac Shaw, Esther McGearty, Sacha Cahill and Finn McGurk, Southside Partnership. All are wearing glasses - Sacha's company supplies computer-sensitive eyewear and it was a joint runner-up at the ILDN awards.

PHOTOS BY: A. MEAGHER



• Minister Regina Doherty tries on a pair of computer-screen-protective glasses, as sold by Sacha Cahill and her partner.



• Karen Cunneen Bilbow & Design receiving her award. Doherty and ILDN chairwoman Molly.

(Cont'd from page 2)

Margaret's winning hattitude

Did she think she was in the running for the ILDN National Enterprise Award?

"No, because I've been to three awards lately and I lost every one of them." Now, Margaret is shooting for the stars and literally wants to work more with them.

"Some people have small dreams that turn into big dreams. I was told not to go to art college, that I wasn't good enough. I want to have my hats in films... Have credits in a movie that wins an Oscar."

However, she is very conscious of serving a wide audience and not just the stars. She prices her work as affordably as possible and also rents out headpieces. Drop into her shop in Ennis and see for yourself!



PHOTO BY: BARRY CRONIN



• Donal Haughey established his business Roscommon Windows with BTWEA support.

PHOTO BY: RAY LUCEY

BTWEA Scheme

Is two years enough?

- Two is tight; a third year would be a safety net

In 2009, there were calls to extend the cover provided by the BTWEA from four to six years for start-ups. Instead, with the economy crashing, the government cut the support. They reduced the social welfare cover from four years to two years and it has stayed like that ever since.

However, not every business is rolling in clover after 24 months. Three award nominees gave us their views:

Sukhi Kaur, nominated by the County Wicklow Partnership, was a joint runner-up at this year's ILDN Awards and she believes two years support is too little.

"Three or four years would be better, definitely. Two years is very tight. It's a known fact that in the first couple of years you don't actually pull a wage," she said.

Extending the scheme, she believes, would "increase the number of businesses on the scheme staying in business".

Sacha Cahill, also a runner-up, agreed that two years was too short: "The more years the better. You really don't make money in the first few years. Even when you are making money, it's generally a small amount," she said.

Karen Cunneen Bilbow from Limerick said, "Two years was sufficient for me, but I was very driven. A third year would be good as a safety net."

more small business start-ups



of Fabricate Home Décor award from Minister Regina Doherty, prize-winner Marie Price-Bolger. Marie joined her mum on stage.



• Sukhvinder Kaur, owner of Sukhi's India which produces food popular in Punjab, India, but made in Co. Wicklow, is congratulated here by Siobhan Lawlor, Principal Officer for Employer Engagement at the DEASP.



• Paul Geraghty, Principal Officer with the Department of Rural and Community Development, prize-winner Sukhvinder Kaur and Joe Saunders, CEO of the Irish Local Development Network.

PHOTO BY: BARRY CRONIN

“For me this is absolutely and fundamentally the kind of state support that we should be growing and investing in” - Minister Doherty

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Regina Doherty, intends to expand the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme (BTWEA).

“For me, this is absolutely and fundamentally the kind of state support that we should be growing and investing in,” she said, speaking at the ILDN National Enterprise Awards ceremony.

Her department is currently reviewing job “activation” schemes and she said: “When we identify the opportunities, I think we can help this particular scheme to grow and develop even more.”

To date, investment in the BTWEA, despite very impressive returns, remains low. However, the minister wishes to see more funds invested to support more unemployed people with good ideas to start their own businesses.

The scheme actually saves her department money, as people on the scheme are generally successful in setting up in a new business and becoming self-employed.

Speaking at the awards - held in Tullamore in May - she said the BTWEA was “one of the schemes

that resonates the most with me”.

“Support is currently being provided to 6,500 people and last year we had a budget of €70,000,” said the minister. Acknowledging that the spending on the scheme was low, she pointed out:

“The return on that small investment is enormous - not just in the tax returns, but (look at) the benefits to your towns and villages and to your self-esteem. It is worth us really considering investing more.”

Though it got publicity because of the awards, the scheme has had a low profile nationally and Minister Doherty first became aware of its existence last year when she was appointed minister.

She now sees it as one of her department’s gemstones and wants the scheme to receive more attention.

Congratulating the awards finalists, she said, “Everyone here at some stage lost their jobs before setting up thriving businesses. In a lot of the cases, you (also) created employment for others in your local community,” she said.

“You show that normal people can have extraordinary ideas and - with a little help and support from agencies and government - can create opportunities for yourselves and

your families. (You) also show good example to others in your towns and villages.”

She said the BTWEA “enables our department to work with people who find themselves at a dip in their lives”.

The BTWEA and the Short Term Enterprise Allowance scheme (STEA) are run by her department, in collaboration with the Department of Rural and Community Development and its Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme.

“It’s common knowledge that a job is probably the single most effective way... to get people to have independence and a quality of life. Equally as important, society benefits and all our citizens benefit when they feel they have an active role in their

community and local economy.

“When we talk about job activation, it sounds very clinical... but, in essence, all we’re trying to do is to help,” she said.

“What I really love about this initiative is the fact that, we’re investing in people’s ideas, their sparks. It’s totally and completely centred around that individual human being to develop their sparks into thriving businesses,” she said.

She applauded the support of Local Development Companies, in particular their enterprise officers.

“You play an enormous role to develop the sparks that they arrive at your doorway with. Thank you from our department for the sweat, blood and tears and the passion,” she said.

Apply for the BTWEA

The Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) scheme assists unemployed people and others getting certain social welfare payments to become self-employed. People who are setting up their own business and who qualify for the BTWEA scheme may retain a percentage of their social welfare payment for up to two years.

More information: <http://bit.ly/BTWEAinfo>

Contact your Local Development Company:

<http://bit.ly/ContactYourLDC>

CLIMATE CHANGE EMERGENCY: Let's

Climate change gives us the o out of our boxes & reconnect w

BY PATRICK KELLEHER

In May, the Irish government declared a climate and biodiversity emergency, making Ireland the second state in the world to do so. The decision came after years of stark warnings from scientists about the destruction of our planet and the disastrous consequences of climate change.

Perhaps the most stark of those warnings came last October, when the United Nations warned that, if we continue as we are, the world could get as much as 3°C warmer.

Swift and decisive action must be taken at all levels; governments will have to change policies and capitalism will have to be challenged. At a grassroots level, communities are going to have to start living in a more sustainable way and building more resilient localities for themselves.

There are many things community groups can do to contribute to efforts to limit the impact of climate change, but for Davie Philip, the first step is clear: communities must pull together.

Philip is an environmental activist and founder of Cultivate Living and Learning, and is one of the founding members of Cloughjordan Ecovillage in Tipperary.

"I think in some ways we've lost our capacity to actually work together. We're so individualised now," Philip says. "We're going to have to think differently about the way we do almost everything."

It is, Philip says, about more than recycling at this point. Communities are going to have to fundamentally change the way they exist if they want to help offset the impact of climate change.

"What we have to think about is our vulnerabilities in the global system," Philip says. "We depend on food and energy that's shipped in from halfway around the world. If there's any weather disruptions, political disruptions, conflicts, we are going hungry or we're in the dark. So, we need to be thinking about localising our economies, especially around food and energy. There's huge opportunity to do that now."

One means of doing this is through community supported agriculture. Under the system, a group of people pay a farmer an agreed fee for a season or for a year and in turn they receive local, organic food.

"It's massive across the world," Philip explains. "In Ireland there are seven initiatives. Ours [in Cloughjordan] is probably the biggest. We have 75 subscribers, we pay two farmers a better wage. It's actually quite an easy thing to do if you've got a cohesive community."

On the more advanced end of the spectrum, communities can consider looking at the Cloughjordan Ecovillage for inspiration. The village has more than 100 residents living in high-performance green homes and has over 20,000 newly planted trees. One of the major strengths in the village is that everybody works together to live

in a way that is sustainable.

"Most people know the characters in their favourite soap opera better than their neighbours," says Philip. "They're so isolated. We're working in little boxes, watching little boxes, shopping in big boxes. It's small pathways of reconnection to a place, reconnecting to the people around us, reconnecting to local providers, farmers, local producers, reconnecting to the living systems around us and regenerating them: that's what we need to do in a nutshell."

Visit Cloughjordan Ecovillage for inspiration: www.thevillage.ie

FOODCLOUD



• FoodCloud CEO Aoibheann O'Brien.

Another measure communities can take to reduce their impact on climate change is to reduce food waste. Producing, transporting and storing food uses fuel and energy, meaning that when it is wasted, there is an environmental impact. The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment says that more than one million tonnes of food is disposed of in Ireland each year, with a third of this coming from households. How much comes from sports clubs, community centres, community cafes and community events such as festivals?

In 2013, Aoibheann O'Brien and Iseult Ward decided they wanted to give surplus food a second life. They founded an organisation called FoodCloud (<https://food.cloud>) which distributes leftover food from businesses and supermarkets to

charities and NGOs across Ireland.

"All of that food that we put on our systems to save would otherwise have gone to waste because stores were not giving that food to people," says Eimear Delahunty, charity engagement manager with FoodCloud. "They were selling it down and whatever was left at 11 o'clock at night was going straight into their landfill."

By taking surplus food, and stopping it from going to a landfill, Delahunty says that community groups are "playing a part in a very big environmental project which means that we are reducing food waste in Ireland."

"Whenever we've done impact surveys, you can see that the environmental part of what we do really resonates with community groups," Delahunty says. "They really do want to be a part of something that is so positive and also something that adds to their own services in a way that means something personally to them."

VOICE IRELAND

While communities often want to enact change, they can sometimes struggle to figure out where to start. This is where Voice Ireland's 'Conscious Consumption Communities' programme comes in. It supports communities to make changes through workshops and education.

"We're trying to change the system and to empower communities to make changes and educate them about waste issues," says Aoife Britton of Voice Ireland.

"We created a programme that could respond to communities," she continues. "We don't go in and tell them what to do, we try to support them to do whatever they want to do. We try to empower and support the community to make changes that are important to them and their locality."

"We offer support," she says. "We meet them wherever they're at on that particular journey."

So far, 12 communities have taken part in the Conscious Consumption Communities programme, and they have funding to work with seven more. Britton believes that there is an increased awareness of environmental issues and that more communities now want to enact change at a grassroots level.

"There's a huge concern around plastic at the moment," Britton says. "People are very concerned about it and want to change things in their area. They want to educate their communities and get them onboard and reduce their use of plastics."

"There's also a lot of concern around disposable waste - disposable coffee cups, disposable bags, single use plastics and single-use items. There's a lot of concern around people recycling properly, composting properly, and bringing their communities on board and getting people involved."

s get practical!

opportunity to come with living locally

COMMUNITY GROUPS WILL LEAD FROM THE BOTTOM-UP

WASTE REDUCTION BY COMMUNITY GROUPS

Waste reduction and recycling are very important. As well as cleaning up their own act, community groups are well placed to lead bottom-up campaigns to lobby local businesses and suppliers - and big business - to end the unnecessary packaging of food and other items.

That presumes they are on top of the issue themselves. If your community café is still using plastic straws, start there.

This is going to grow. Civil society groups will soon be looking to have plastic-free towns. Saying goodbye to plastic straws is only a first step.

APPLY THIS AUTUMN FOR SEAI GRANTS

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) works with communities to transform how we think about and use energy.

You can apply to improve energy ratings of homes across your whole community through the SEAI's 'Better Energy Communities' scheme.

From the autumn, the SEAI will welcome applications for 2020 grants: <https://www.seai.ie/grants/community-grants/>



• President Michael D Higgins in Cloughjordan Eco-Village, in 2012.

PHOTO BY: ROB MCNAMARA



• Karen O'Donohoe, Cottage Markets founder.

PHOTO BY: A. MEAGHER

START A COTTAGE MARKET

By setting up a cottage market, you are helping to mitigate climate change, promote rural life and support grassroot enterprises.

A cottage market is led by the community for the community, and develops organically "from the inside out", according to founder Karen O'Donohoe.

She has teamed up with the founder of Grow It Yourself, Mick Kelly, and there are fabulous tips on both of their websites on how best to proceed.

Find out about Karen's work with communities here: <http://thecottagemarket.ie>

COMMUNITY FARMING

To see why people change careers and get into community supported agriculture, read our report about a professional surfer who gave up a jet-setting lifestyle to establish Moyhill Farm in Co. Clare.

Ref: Issue 47, Autumn 2014, pages 22-23 - you can read it online here: <http://bit.ly/MoyhillStart>

Moyhill is now a 60-acre farm. Check out their truly incredible progress in this video uploaded in June of this year: youtu.be/slu07DfA8H8

GROW IT YOURSELVES!

It's not all about reducing. One thing you can expand is your community's interest in gardening.

There are also great tips on starting a community garden online: www.giy.ie

RECYCLING

Community groups can seek to improve access to recycling facilities and, at the same time, offer educational programmes - eg in conjunction with local schools - to educate residents about the importance of recycling.

BOTTOM-UP ACTION

- Things communities
can start doing today



**LET THE GRASS GROW
(AND FREE UP LABOUR)**



**SERVE ICE-COLD FRESH
TAP WATER AT EVENTS
(NOT PLASTIC BOTTLES)**



**PROVIDE A RECYCLING
CHOICE FROM NOW ON**

Climate Change: Communities rising

Clare “most vulnerable to climate breakdown”

- *Futureproof* activist, speaking at Shannon protest during Trump visit

President Donald Trump's visit to Ireland in early June brought together many like-minded people concerned over his country's policies.

Aisling Wheeler of Extinction Rebellion Clare said that President Trump was “a climate criminal” for pulling the US out of the UN's Paris Agreement on climate change.

Many present were there primarily over that issue. Human rights activists were also to the fore.

Futureproof Clare spokesperson, Anne-Marie Harrington, said, “We are the county that is most vulnerable to the storms and flooding of climate breakdown, while Shannon LNG, a terminal for US fracked gas, may be built in our Shannon Estuary. We don't want our home to be transit point for this climate-wrecking fossil fuel.”

John Lannon of Shannonwatch was joined by a former US soldier who had flown via Shannon a decade earlier to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan. He condemned human rights abuses committed by US soldiers who passed through the airport.

Newly elected MEP, Clare Daly, condemned US imperialism under Trump and his predecessors,



• Protesters at Shannon focused on Trump's views on climate change and human rights. Above right: TD and former minister Jan O'Sullivan with George Clancy, international rugby referee and a board member of 'Changing Ireland'.

including Obama. She and other speakers accused Trump of misogyny.

Other politicians present included Senator Paul Gavan (SF), TD and former minister Jan O'Sullivan (Lab) and newly elected Clare County Councillor, Róisín Garvey (Green) notable for being the only Clare councillor to condemn President Trump's visit.

While the protests made national headlines, the turnout of around 200

protesters was lower than expected.

A half-dozen Trump supporters wearing 'Make America Great Again' caps and t-shirts waved flags from the other side of the road.

The day before Mr Trump touched down, President Michael D Higgins spoke about his country's “regressive and pernicious” attitudes towards climate change.

Trump, talking to media inside the airport, claimed not to have heard the criticism.



Meanwhile, his entourage was brought on a detour from the airport to avoid the protesters who, for a short time, blocked the main access road into the airport.

In 2004, tens of thousands protested at the same place when President Bush visited. Anti-war sentiment was high and climate change was barely on the agenda then.

Report & photos: A. Meagher.

HOGAN: “Rural communities are champing at the bit to play their part”

- We need to do more, faster, Commissioner tells Irish Rural Link conference

“Rural communities are intensely aware of the risks posed by climate change and they are champing at the bit to play their part.

“In the climate debate, rural areas are increasingly viewed as holding massive potential to provide solutions to the climate crisis. This is both correct and over-due.”

So said EU Commissioner Phil Hogan speaking on May 27th at Irish Rural Link's conference on ‘Climate Change: Opportunities for Rural Communities’.

It looked at how rural communities can help lessen the impacts of climate change in agriculture, energy, transport and the rural economy. It discussed opportunities for green jobs in rural area, community energy grants and smart village planning (Ref: Issue 64).

In his speech, the former Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government highlighted Irish towns, villages and remote



• Commissioner Phil Hogan visits the Burren.

PHOTO COURTESY: EUROPEAN COMMISSION.

communities already taking action:

- A number of Ireland's offshore islands are rolling out electric community vehicles.

- The Burren Project in Co. Clare

is considered a model of best practice in Europe when it comes to designing a smart and sustainable locally-based agri-environment scheme.

- Towns are starting to ban the

use of plastic straws in bars and restaurants. Eg Westport.

- More rural households are availing of sustainable energy grants to retrofit their homes and upgrade their energy systems to renewable power sources.

Commissioner Hogan welcomed the fact that, “Our citizens want the CAP and other policies to do more for the climate and environment.”

He however accepted that, “The reality is that we need to do more, and we need to do it faster (and) a ‘great leap forward’ is urgently needed.”



Irish Rural Link
Nasc Tuaithe na hÉireann

Climate Change

Action Plan sees need for “a just transition & community leadership”

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

The Government's recently-published 'Climate Action Plan' makes 26 references to “community”, with one chapter dedicated to *Citizen Engagement, Community Leadership and Just Transition*.

In launching the plan, the Government boldly declared “a climate and biodiversity emergency”.

The 150-page plan - prompted by a Citizens' Assembly - promises: “We will establish a Community Outreach programme, building on the success of other outreach initiatives and the Green Schools programme, and rooted in community and voluntary organisations and other civil society groups, that encourages local communities to drive change at a local level.”

Although there is no specific reference anywhere in the report to “community development”, it talks of community leadership (8 references), community groups (4), community participation (3), community engagement (3) and community level (2). It also refers once each to: community action, community outreach, community stakeholders, structures and training.

In total, there are 180 actions promised and the work will be under constant review.

Describing the plan as “key to ensuring the sustainability of communities throughout Ireland,” Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring, said: “We look forward to actively engaging with communities to deliver

this plan.”

He said that communities and government departments “have an important role to play” and his department will now review the criteria for accessing funds such as the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund “to ensure low carbon investments are prioritised”.

The plan includes key actions that rely on local authorities working with communities.

It specifically commits Local Community Development Committees “to step-up how we mobilise and support urban and rural communities to reduce carbon emissions... by assisting in scaling up from an individual project-based approach to a more coordinated and structured approach locally”.

On Public Participation Networks, it says these “will be leveraged to share information and knowledge, as well as a means to animate local community groups to get involved in climate action initiatives.”

It notes that there are “currently approximately 15,000 community organisations registered with 31 PPNs”. However, concerns have been raised elsewhere that these figures may overstate the real level of support for, and strength of, PPNs. This is to be addressed.

At national level, the plan envisages all major government investments and decisions being climate-proofed.

Download the plan:
<http://bit.ly/ClimAction19>



• According to the Government's Climate Action Plan, the country's 215 Citizens Information Centres and 330 libraries “will be engaged to provide information to citizens on the transition to a low-carbon society”. Above: Minister Michael Ring is accompanied by Margaret Doran, Libraries Development Unit, Dept. of Rural and Community Development, in turning the sod on the new library in Edgeworthstown, Co. Longford.

10 YEARS AGO

Attacks on community development were “devastating”

-- New report recalls “systematic” cuts from 2002-2015



• Cathleen O'Neill (right) chats to children on a protest in September 2009 over cuts to community development projects.

PHOTO BY: A. MEAGHER.

The impact of cuts on communities over a 12-year period is documented in an important report that is gaining interest ever since it was published in October last year.

Titled ‘The Systematic Destruction of the Community Development, Anti-Poverty and Equality Movement’, it was written by Patricia Kelleher, PhD, and Cathleen O'Neill, MA.

It looks at the shift from participatory democracy to neo-liberalism, the shutting down of dissent, and the triumph of managerialism - which the authors say marked “the end of community development” in Ireland.

“Community organisations funded by the state were ordered to desist from campaigning and advocacy,” they state.

“The influence - which community projects, working class communities and communities of interest such as Travellers and migrants had - shifted dramatically to managers and accountants in central government.

“The role of the community worker moved from bottom-up development worker to managing numbers and caseloads. This left little space for

workers to engage in grass-root community organising,” they state.

“The closures had a devastating impact,” said a worker interviewed after 19 community development projects shut down in 2009.

The period covered by the research runs from 2002 to 2015 and, therefore, does not look at developments since the set up of the new Department of Rural and Community Development.

Ms Kelleher says - in her introduction - that the study is part of broader research into the role and contribution of working class activism in Dublin.

It was initiated after discussions with Dublin community activists including Rita Fagan in Inchicore, Joan Byrne in Ballymun and Noreen Byrne in Clondalkin.

Ms O'Neill worked as a co-ordinator with Kilbarrack Community Development Project, which was one of the few to turn down the Government “offer” to have their work taken over by a local development company. Kilbarrack chose independence over funding.

The 51-page report is available for free online:

<http://bit.ly/Cuts2002-2015>



• Community activists on a protest in 2009.

PHOTO: A. MEAGHER.

PILOT: Community Wellbeing

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORKS

PEOPLE'S VISION DRIVING POLICY CHANGE

- Wicklow's Community Wellbeing pilot project is one of four nationally



Public Participation Networks (PPNs) are - in many places - doing exceptional work at community level, and Wicklow PPN is one.

Last year they joined a pilot programme to develop a toolkit for communities to develop a 'Vision for Community Wellbeing' for now and future generations. The other places taking part in the pilot are Cork city, Longford and Roscommon.

This follows on from a recommendation in 2014 by the Working Group Report on Citizen Engagement with Local Government.

It said, "Each county/city PPN will commence its work by going through a process to set out what it considers necessary to promote well-being for present and future generations".

We often think about wellbeing in terms of an individual's good physical and mental health. Community wellbeing refers to the wider conditions that communities need for a better quality of life, a healthier environment and increased prosperity.

HELEN HOWES, PPN Resource Worker, tells Wicklow's story:

"We used the toolkit to run 11 workshops, five online consultations and we took on board two submissions. We now have guiding visions for the county under six headings: health; environment and sustainability; participation and good governance; economy and resources; values, culture and meaning; and social and community development.

The benefits of doing this work have been amazing and includes:

- There is real engagement between the PPN and communities.
- The work of the PPN has been highlighted and we have increasing membership.

- It has led to more collaboration and has strengthened relationships between us and various community stakeholders.

It got communities to engage with each other. Groups from Hollywood attended the Baltinglass workshop and got so much out of it that they went on to develop a Hollywood Forum last year. By year's end, the Hollywood Forum was approaching the Baltinglass Forum to see if they could work together on mutually beneficial projects.

- Now our PPN reps have an even stronger mandate when they attend Special Policy Committee and other meetings of the council on our behalf. We provided training to our Secretariat and Reps to show them how to use the Vision Statements and more recently how to source data to back up the statements in policy development.

- With this mandate and material, we honestly advocate on the community's behalf. This year we have already used the Vision Statements in submissions to the: Volunteering Strategy, An Garda Síochána Policing Plan, Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Strategy, and Heritage Ireland 2030.

We think they will be invaluable when the next edition of the Local Economic and Community Plan goes out for consultation.

To contact Wicklow PPN: T: 087 189 5145. E: countywicklowppn@gmail.com W: countywicklowppn.ie FB: facebook.com/CWPPN/

More info: All of Wicklow PPN's 'Wellbeing Statements' are on their website.

REACHING THE PUBLIC IN MOUNTAINOUS COUNTRY

- Population 142,332 (2016)
- 5 Municipal Districts
- 2,027 sq. kilometres
- County characterised by hills, forests, lakes and seascapes. County divided by the Wicklow Mountains. Also, an urban/rural divide.
- In the midst of this, Co. Wicklow PPN is a network of almost 300 community groups.



COOLOCK: National launch



NEW POLICY WILL TAP "MASSIVE" SOCIAL ENTERPRISE POTENTIAL IN COMMUNITIES

- First government policy for social enterprise is widely welcomed

The Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring, launched the Government's first-ever policy on social enterprise, on July 18th and it has been widely welcomed.

Acknowledging there had been a long wait and thanking those who pushed for it, Minister Ring said the new policy "will enable social enterprises to grow in scale, support jobs, and make a positive impact on individuals and communities in both rural and urban areas".

"The policy and the (26) commitments it contains will enable social enterprise to reach its full potential," he said.

The policy aims to provide support by increasing awareness of social enterprise, growing and strengthening social enterprise, and improving policy alignment. These will be put into action between now and 2022.

The Irish Local Development Network (ILDN) was among many to express support following the launch which was held in Coolock, Dublin. The chairperson of the ILDN's working group on social economy, Pádraig Casey, congratulated the Department of Rural and Community Development on completing the policy, saying why such a "supportive framework" was welcome:

"Ireland is highly reliant on social enterprise, yet has the potential to create many more services and jobs in the sector. According to a 2013 Forfás report, Ireland's social enterprise sector supports over 25,000 jobs, but has the potential to create at least a further 65,000. Before now, a framework has been lacking to drive this potential."

He said that Local Development Companies are "ideally placed" to deliver support for local social enterprise development" in collaboration with others.

LDCs have 40 staff dedicated to supporting social enterprises across the country.

National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022



• The policy lists 26 commitments to be delivered by Government and stakeholders to develop social enterprise. **Below:** The policy's objectives.

Dr Senan Cooke – co-founder of Communities Creating Jobs and author of *'The Enterprising Community'* told us, "This policy is going to open possibilities beyond comprehension."

"I really am excited about the new policy. I see it as a seminal document and if properly implemented, it will transform the social enterprise sector."

"It's the right thing at the right time. There's a huge interest in – and a huge need for – social enterprise right now," he said.

Calling on people to promote the new policy, he said progress will take time: "A lot will depend on the department's implementation group and their determination to bring a whole-of-government approach, though there is a growing awareness of the potential of social enterprise among the officials and beyond."

While it could "take a few years to really get the full potential onto the

table" the potential was huge.

"Social enterprise is a massive sleeping giant, which should be leading the way in revitalising communities," he said.

Speaking at the launch, Paul O'Sullivan, CEO of Clann Credo, said that the policy delivers a road map which will in turn "lead to both provision and preservation of badly needed jobs and services at local level in every region of Ireland."

Meanwhile, on social media, the Carmichael Centre said the policy would "help to grow and strengthen social enterprises".

Camara praised the "focus on leadership and better policy alignment", while UCC's Ignite incubator programme was pleased that "the value of (their) social entrepreneurs and social enterprises won't go unnoticed".

Community Finance Ireland is a charity that gives loans to community groups, charities, sports clubs and social enterprises and it said the policy would help their 51 social enterprise customers to grow "and bring deeper awareness of the economic and social impact they deliver".

They agreed with Minister Ring when he said there was no reason why Ireland could not become a leader in social enterprise internationally.

The launch was hosted by Speedpak, a social enterprise based in Coolock on Dublin's Northside. It works to improve the employability of long-term unemployed people by providing real work experience, training and mentoring. (Disclaimer: 'Changing Ireland' is among its customers - Speedpak packs and distributes our magazine). Catering at the launch was provided by Mugshot, a social enterprise set up to train ex-offenders as baristas and provide them with employment after release.

The new National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland will complement a new five-year strategy to 'Support the Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland', and a new 'National Volunteering Strategy', both of which are also being developed by the Department.



• Minister Michael Ring launched the new national policy in Coolock.

The 30-page policy outlines clear advantages to having a nationally-defined view of social enterprise.

Now that we know what it is, social enterprise activity in the Republic can be measured and better supported.

The draft attracted a lot of attention when it was published in April and over 100 submissions were made by mid-May.

Many questions were asked of the document, including about the proposed definition which has since

THE FINAL DEFINITION

been refined.

For example, in the draft, co-operatives - which many would argue are the original social enterprises - were omitted. Following the public consultation, co-ops that met certain conditions were included in the definition.

Ireland's definition is now broadly in line with those of EU institutions.

It reads: "A social enterprise is an enterprise whose objective is to achieve a social, societal or environmental impact, rather than maximising profit for its owners or shareholders."

"It pursues its objectives by trading on an ongoing basis through the provision of goods and/or services, and by reinvesting surpluses into achieving social objectives."

"It is governed in a fully accountable and transparent manner and is independent of the public sector. If dissolved, it should transfer its assets to another organisation with a similar mission."

To download: bit.ly/Socent2019-22

COLLABORATION

CROKER CELEBRATION AS T

BY KIRSTY TOBIN & ALLEN MEAGHER

On Thursday 23 May, hordes of excited people descended on Croke Park, but it wasn't for the Spice Girls (kicking off their comeback tour that night at the iconic stadium) – it was for the Wheel's Charity Summit.

The annual event fell in the association's 20th-anniversary year, lending a celebratory tone to proceedings, particularly when Dublin Ukelele Collective appeared in the main hall to serenade the crowds waiting for an Taoiseach Leo Varadkar to take to the stage.

An Taoiseach honoured the 20-year legacy of the Wheel in his speech, applauding their work and speaking on the importance of active citizenship, volunteering and philanthropy (the latter of which he called a form of patriotism).

Deirdre Garvey, CEO of the Wheel, still didn't let an Taoiseach off the hook: "Our sector right now wants to – and needs to – see respectful collaboration between the community-voluntary sector and all departments of government to create meaningful solutions within the State."

She got the last word, too:

"There is a huge passion and commitment and dedication here today, and there always is when those from the community and voluntary sector gather," she said. "We will never give up trying to make a positive contribution; it is in our DNA."



• *Cathy Grieve, Luke Meany and Ashley Butler of Epilepsy Ireland.*

Cathy Grieve, Luke Meany and Ashley Butler of Epilepsy Ireland attended the Wheel's annual summit. We flouted 'no photography' rules (they meant of the Spice Girls, we swear) to take this snap of the three during the lunch and networking session.

Luke and Ashley work to provide information and support to people with epilepsy, and to their families and carers. Cathy is a member of the Epilepsy Ireland board.

There were plenty of representatives from various charities and non-profits at the event, including Ava Battles and Aoife Kirwan.



• *Ava Battles and Aoife Kirwan of MS Ireland.*

PHOTOS BY: K. TOBIN

Ava is the CEO of MS Ireland and Aoife works in information, advocacy and research for the national organisation, which works with people with MS, their families and carers, and a range of stakeholders, to create independence and choice for those with the disease and to provide them and their families with support.



• *Mick Hanley of Dublin City FM and Rob Cullen of Dublin Chamber.*

Rob Cullen of Dublin Chamber (on right) and Mick Hanley of Dublin City FM were both at the summit representing their organisations, which are members of the Wheel.

Mick was at the event simply as an attendee, making the most of the plenaries and practice sessions on the schedule.

Rob, on the other hand, said he was at the event because Dublin Chamber supports a lot of the charities in Dublin and around the country, and he wanted to make sure that many more knew that these types of supports were available.

Michelle Byrne and Jean Coleman of the Irish Wheelchair Association, and Damon Matthew Wu of the National Council for

People with Disabilities Limerick, were all smiles as they explained why they had gotten into working in the community and voluntary sector.

Jean saw IWA as a great organisation – one she very much still enjoys working with. Michelle echoed that, saying she had met some wonderful people through her work.

For Damon, it was an even more cut-and-dry reason: "It's a civic duty. It's my civic duty to help other people with disabilities to help themselves and others."

ABOUT THE WHEEL

The Wheel was established in 1999 and has grown to become the biggest umbrella group for community, voluntary and charity organisations - small and large - in the Republic.

It employs over 15 staff and provides support to 1,500 member organisations to grow stronger - in areas such as governance and volunteer management. The underlying belief is that "stronger charities make for stronger communities".

It is reflective - it seeks "changes in thinking and attitudes within and about our sector", and it seeks a better "brand identity" for what it terms "the community, charity and voluntary sector".

The Wheel also seeks to shape public policy, bring together people and groups with common interests, and provide training and information.



• *The Wheel CEO, Deirdre Garvey with An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar.*

PHOTO BY: THE WHEEL.

An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, attended The Wheel's conference in May, and praised its "civic republicanism": "Twenty years on your work is helping to build a thriving community and voluntary sector in Ireland - one that has fairness, opportunity and justice at its heart."



THE WHEEL HITS 20 IN STYLE

TOP 8 MOST PRESSING ISSUES THAT WHEEL MEMBERS IDENTIFY

- **Competitive tenders** based on lowest price rather than best service – not inclusive of full service delivery costs.
- **Threat to ethos** from competition with private sector.
- **Public trust** and confidence.
- **Deterioration of relationships with statutory funders:** moving from partnerships to contractual relationships.
- **Recruiting and retaining staff:** Funding is inadequate, impacting on salaries and pay restoration.
- **Recruiting board members** (a governance burden).
- **Ongoing increase in demand for services** that is seemingly impossible to address due to lack of funding.
- The impact of greatly **increased compliance** requirements.
- The **rising cost of insurance** and threat to work of charities.



• *Damon Matthew Wu (National Council for People with Disabilities Limerick), and Michelle Byrne and Jean Coleman of the Irish Wheelchair Association at The Wheel's summit.*

• *Wheely nice cake!*



THE EXPERT VIEW

Collaboration in the Community Sector is like sex

- Everyone talks about it all the time.
- Everyone thinks everyone else is doing it.
- Most of those who are doing it are doing it really poorly.
- They think it will be better next time.
- They're not practicing it safely.
- Everyone is bragging about their successes all the time although few have truly experienced success.
- Done right, it multiplies.

Send us your expert views on a topic of interest!



Thanks to our friends in Wexford for this gem of an insight. You know who you are!

PUBLIC VOTES ON SPENDING: From I

LUCAN WAS FIRST TO PILOT LARGE-SCALE PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN IRELAND

- If South Dublin County Council could hand power over to public to decide on spending, so could your council!

In 2017, South Dublin County Council (SDCC) successfully piloted a participatory budgeting exercise in the Lucan electoral area, one which, if it were to be scaled up, could be rolled out nationally.

In a nutshell, people in Lucan, Adamstown and Palmerstown were called upon to choose eight projects from a selection of 17 shortlisted proposals (from a longlist of 160 ideas). The winning projects shared €300,000 between them.

It was such a success that participatory budgeting (PB) has now become an annual initiative run by SDCC.

In Lucan, over 2,500 votes were cast in the online and paper ballot and - in order to encourage young people to participate - no age limit was imposed, unlike in Australia (see opposite).

The voters went for a playground, a feasibility study about restoring a bridge, Christmas lights in Lucan Village, planting native apple trees, free library book banks in public places, a multi-games wall and more. Project costs varied - the playground received €120,000 while the book banks needed just €3,000.

Researchers from the Institute of Public Administration found that the exercise “proved very popular” with 94% of local people surveyed saying they would like to take part in another one.

However, the researchers noted: “Some of the Councillors felt that, as might be expected, the winning projects were those who had the strongest lobbying groups behind them.”

Also, since paper ballot voting accounted for only about 10% of all the votes cast, it was recommended that voters be given more time (the ballot was held over four days) and more venues where they could cast votes.

It was also recommended that “more attention be given at an early stage to groups that traditionally do not have high levels of participation such as migrants and people with disabilities.”

Overall, however, PB was deemed a great success and, last year, SDCC repeated the exercise, again with €300,000 to spend and this time in a new area, covering Clondalkin, Rathcoole and Newcastle.

Explaining its enthusiasm for participatory budgeting, SDCC said it saw it as “a local democratic process” which “gives people direct power to determine spending priorities to improve their community.”

The council met in July, 2018, to choose the next area to experience PB.

- A. Meagher



• People with their ballot cards in Lucan's pilot of participatory budgeting.

Year	2017	2018
Electoral Area	Lucan	Clondalkin
Ideas submitted	160	230
Workshops	3	4
Workshop participants	120	131
No. of projects on ballot	17	24
Ballots cast (online & in person)	2500	1500
Winning projects	8	15

To find out more, contact Niall Noonan, SDCC's communications manager. E: nnoonan@sdbulincoco.ie M: 086-464-6172.



• “This is an historic moment. For the very first time in Ireland the people have decided on how a local authority spends its budget,” said Cllr. Guss O’Connell, then mayor of the South Dublin County Council, speaking on the night the 2017 results were announced.

IN-DEPTH EVALUATION

To read an in-depth evaluation of SDCC's exercise, see Laura Shannon and Dr. Richard Boyle's research which was published by the Institute of Public Administration (IPA). It is free to download.

Ms Shannon is editor of the IPA's Local Authority Times (which features on page 17).

W: <http://bit.ly/IPA-PBsouthdublin>

WHAT PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING GIVES YOU

“Participatory Budgeting gives you and your neighbours the power to improve your area as a place to live, work and play. It is empowering, civic minded and fun. It is also educational, fair and transparent.”

- <https://haveyoursay.southdublin.ie>



Meet the new grant assessor: You!

- NSW residents to decide annually on \$20m worth of community grants



• *Participatory budgeting - PB for short - is a process in which the public can participate directly in the allocation of local public finances. If it can be done successfully in Lucan and New South Wales (above) it can be done by more local authorities here.*

The government of New South Wales (NSW) in Australia has adopted a bold approach to approving grants for community initiatives.

It has taken some of the decision-making power from local MPs and put it squarely in the hands of community residents – who, after all, know best what an area needs.

NSW includes Sydney and has a population of over eight million people. From now on, the government will let the public vote each year - in their own areas - on how best to spend \$24m (€15m) in community grants.

Groups in Ireland are used to submitting anything from three to 30 pages (and more) of documentation to officials and so are community groups in Australia.

But imagine if instead you just had to convince your community that your project idea was among the most worthy ones.

The approach isn't new: participatory budgeting began in Brazil 30 years ago and in Ireland one local authority has embraced it (see opposite). If that was scaled up nationally, it might look something like the initiative in NSW.

Under the NSW scheme - called 'My Community Project' - grants of between €20,000

and €120,000 (approximately) will be decided upon by residents. Groups are seeking support for everything from Men's Sheds to community transport and cultural fairs.

Anyone in the community can propose a project, so long as they have the backing of a sponsor – such as a council, community group, school, charity or club.

A list of proposed projects is drawn up and then the community votes on it online (or by calling into a centre).

Unusually, voting takes place not in a single day, but over a month. Voters must be aged 16 or over and provide proof of identity and proof of address.

Voters follow a simple ranking system, picking between three and five projects from their area and voting for them in order of preference. It is the community-level equivalent of the type of voting we have in Ireland - proportional representation with a single transferable vote.

If by chance the vote is split, the head of government in NSW can make a tie-breaker decision.

This is the first year the community vote is being held. Groups had until May to submit proposals, voting began in July and the successful



projects will be announced in September. Grant winners have 12 months to complete their projects.

The NSW government has by no means given over all grant-making decisions to communities.

Officials continue, as before, to adjudicate on applications for important local infrastructure projects. Their Community Building Partnership programme is like a cross between LEADER and other schemes here such as the Community Enhancement Programme.

W: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/improving-nsw/projects-and-initiatives/my-community-project/>

- K. Tobin & A. Meagher

SMALLER SCALE: PUBLIC'S BEST IDEAS PUT TO VOTE IN MONAGHAN

Earlier this year (*in Issue 63, Feb-March, 2019*) we reported on a small-scale participatory budgeting exercise conducted in Co. Monaghan.

Monaghan Integrated Development asked people in Castleblayney for project ideas. The best ideas were put on display, the public was invited to vote for their favourite and the winning idea - restoring waste ground - was funded and supported.

The competition, called 'Thriving Together', was supported by the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP).



• *Votes being counted in Castleblayney.*

Community development in the capital

INNER CITY DUBLIN

13 community groups together

- Meet Dublin City Community Co-op, Ireland's only co-operative.

BY SHARON BESRA

INTRODUCTION

There are 49 organisations across Ireland providing local development supports and delivering SICAP, but one of them is not like the others: the Dublin City Community Co-operative.

In Dublin's inner city, those in need of community-level support have somewhere somewhat unusual to turn: the Dublin City Community Co-operative, an umbrella entity consisting of 13 member organisations that have been working in the area for the past 15 to 20 years.

This co-operative (or the Co-op, as it's known) is working towards sustainable community development, beginning with ensuring that local people are included and involved in decision-making in relation to their needs and shared experiences.

The Co-op has been delivering Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) funding since 2015 and, when SICAP 2 launched last year, they once more secured the contract. It is the only co-operative in Ireland with a contract to deliver SICAP.

The unique structure of the Co-op works in their favour. Each of the 13 members is involved in decision-making, and the co-operative setup ensures that those decisions come from a coherent and unified voice with a shared purpose born of a strong community development ethos.

It allows for a diversity of thought, too – one that local development companies may not have. The 13 members of the Co-op are actively working with marginalised and hard-to-reach people in inner city communities, making it easier not to overlook any one group and allowing the organisation to be a better advocate for social inclusion, social justice,

poverty eradication and other positive societal changes.

On the governance side, each member of the Co-op is represented by one person, ensuring that the specific natures of the communities in which they work are effectively represented across the board.

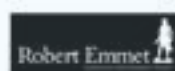
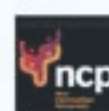
The Co-op has an independent chairperson not affiliated to any of its 13 members. The current chair is Hugh Frazer, former CEO of the Combat Poverty Agency.

The Co-op runs a variety of services – such as training and development, information and funding advice, advocacy, and educational guidance, among others – but members (and the board) are continually reassessing these services in light of the issues facing those living in the inner city.

According to Noel Wardick, CEO of the Co-op, the biggest issue currently facing Inner City Dublin communities is housing and the homelessness crisis: “We have about 10,000 people homeless; 4,000 children stranded. It is a shameful statistic and has to be addressed and has to be resolved.”

While temporary housing and emergency accommodations are being created, there is still an impact on child development and family cohesion. We need to see the “psychological and social consequences [of homelessness], particularly on the family and children,” he says.

As Noel sees it, the housing crisis is getting worse. He wonders – as we're having this problem “during a period of full economic recovery”



– what will happen if the economy goes into decline, and highlights the fact that many in disadvantaged communities are already living day-to-day. He urges people to consider long-term impacts.

The area the Co-op serves also faces significant issues around crime and drug use. In addition to organised gangs calling the inner city home, substance misuse is rife. The impact of this is manifested in a memorial (on Buckingham Street, near the Co-op) unveiled in 2000 – a monument in memory of all those who died as a direct or indirect result of heroin.

It's hoped that continued investment in training resources, and policy development and analysis, can go some way towards tackling these issues, but it's an uphill battle.

The Co-op has seen the changing

face of Dublin up close over the last number of years, as inner city communities have changed from predominantly Irish to a mix of many ethnicities.

This can present challenges – not least in making it harder to identify communities – but, according to Noel, it's a matter for the Co-op to ensure that local people are aware that it's a shared community, rather than encouraging an ‘us vs them’ ideology. Making sure that there is no segregation is hugely important, he says.

He points out that one of the Co-op's members is New Communities Partnership, itself an umbrella network for migrant-led organisations and one that provides services and supports for multiple ethnicities.

W: dublincitycommunitycoop.ie

'The actions we take affect the actions of people around the globe'

Siobhán Larkin, adult education manager at Lourdes Youth and Community Services (LYCS) spoke about linking the local with the global, something her organisation has done for many years.

“Part of our adulthood programme is the development education programme. We deliver training to local people so that they can realise that the problems that they are experiencing are experienced by people who are living in poverty and social exclusion in other parts of the world.

“The outcome of that is that people start to understand that the action

that we take here affects the actions of somebody else somewhere else in the globe,” she said.

Development Education fosters critical thinking, active citizenship and a sense of shared struggle for a more just and equal world.

LYCS is outstanding in this area nationally. Their experience is referred to in the Irish Aid strategy and they also provide training for trainers.

W: www.lycs.ie/development-education

A busy metro station in Istanbul has installed “reverse vending rail cards simply by recycling plastic bottles or aluminium cans.

18

machines” that allow passengers to add credit to their city. The idea was first trialled in Beijing in 2014.

enjoy more firepower

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Co-op CEO: 'We will advocate for change, or improvement, or complete cancellation of policies if they're negative'

Noel Wardick, CEO of the Co-op, explained what is so special about the work they do:

"We cover a whole range of community development in the broad spectrum. Anything related to social inclusion, marginalisation, disadvantage, and injustice – we will tackle it.

"What does that mean? A whole range of activities from informal education and targeted youth work – aimed at marginalised and hard to reach youth and children – to community crèches, as well as a whole range of support and guidance services, and signposting.

"Our organisations and our member organisations serve from the youngest – the kids (in crèches and community crèches) – all the way up to the elderly senior citizens. The range of programmes needs to address isolation for older people, and loneliness and age-related issues such as that. Getting people back to education, confidence building, self-esteem... all these things generally happen in communities that are marginalised.

"And then trying to address the big policy issues... We cover the inner city of Dublin, so that's our chief advocate area – the north and south sides of the River Liffey. We will advocate for changes and policies, whether they are local policies impacting the city or whether they are national policies impacting the whole country. We will advocate

for change, or improvement, or complete cancellation of policies if they are negative.

"In order to achieve those objectives, we engage with the government at every level, working with departments – whether it's the Department of Education, Department of Rural and Community Development, or Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection – right down to the local level, to deal with Dublin City Council (DCC) and local officials.

"We have very close interactions with DCC where we try to advocate for policy, funding and interventions, and equally we are always prepared to campaign for changes to policies where we feel they are not working or are having a negative impact in our communities," he said.



'Our work is about empowering people on the ground' says LYCS CEO

Sarah Kelleher, CEO of Lourdes Youth and Community Services (LYCS) – one of the members of the Co-op – was among those who worked to bring the Co-op together. Now, it works very well:

"We were always part of

the community development programme network in Ireland, but that slowly got dismantled.

"We had no partnership (aka Local Development Company) and the consequences of that were things like not being able to apply for EU funding or other grants because you had to go through a partnership. We also missed the support of having a partnership who would take an overview of issues that we deal with – education, training, employment and so on.

"Community projects in the area came together with the view to form a co-op.

"While it took a lot of effort and energy, it has been a hugely successful programme because it brings all the 13 projects together. It means that the direction and the vision for each programme, for each project, still remained on the ground, while we all came together and created a bigger vision for the whole of the Co-op and the whole of the inner city.

"We are running the Co-op

ourselves and, like any other co-op, it is only as good as the members participating. And so there is an incentive for everybody to be an active member and to work for the whole co-op for the benefit of everybody.

"It is our belief that this work is about empowering people on the ground for the betterment of their own lives and to be active participants in their work.

"Our projects are all based in the communities. The needs differ sometimes from area to area if not from street to street.

"One thing we all have in common is that we are working in community development projects. Because of the agreements between ourselves around the methodology, it actually makes life a lot easier," she said.

• *Founder, Eoin Kennedy.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF LOOKWEST.IE

You don't buy a ticket. You write a paper (or you can submit a video presentation, a poem or spoken word) which you then speak about on the day in a small group setting. Everyone participates, so, this is perfect for community types.

The remote, rural, West of Ireland location is deliberate.

Unusually, because the emphasis is on getting everyone to contribute, there are only five traditional-style guest speakers and none of them are lined up for the main day (the Saturday).

Even the local venues are interesting. Your group could wind up in a pub, a café or a forest in Cong for a group discussion.

This is a good opportunity to network with people from outside the Community and Voluntary Sector. If you're looking for ideas to write about, the organisers led by Eoin Kennedy are interested in 'how to' guides to community life.

'Changing Ireland' and CongRegation have a list of 'how to' topics that you're welcome to use, from 'How to tackle gang violence' to 'How to set up a mini-Gaeltacht in your community'.

Many people are unaware of how community development works. This is a great chance to educate a new audience.

W: <https://congregation.ie>

INSPIRE A NATION: **Awesome People**

STROKE ACTIVIST

VOLUNTEER PROFILE - Larry Masterson

INTERVIEW & PROFILE BY: EGIN MCCARTHY

Larry Masterson from Co. Donegal leads the voluntary group 'Different Strokes for Different Folks', which he founded with other survivors after suffering a stroke five years ago.

Q. What are you reading at the moment?

David Roland's 'How I Rescued My Brain' is the story of David's neurological difficulties and his remarkable cognitive recovery. It is also an account of a journey to emotional health and wellbeing.

Q. What's the last film you saw?

'Tolkien'. It was excellent, capturing the Tolkien spirit and magic. Its depiction of his childhood experiences and Oxford student years, together with subtle hints and images of the books to come, was well-balanced.

Q. Person you most admire?

Ruairi McKiernan, born in Cavan. (Ruairi is an Irish social entrepreneur innovator and campaigner on youth, community, health, and social justice issues).



Q. The top four issues in Ireland today besides the economy?

Overcoming inequalities and defending human rights.
Climate change - reality needs to take hold.
Walking the walk - to a better future.
Sustainable development goals outside of Dublin - taking stock.

Q. Nationally, we need...

A good plan covering all the areas addressed in the Irish Heart Foundation's 'Stroke Manifesto', with a commitment to providing multi-annual funding to execute this strategy.

Q. We need less ...luxuries. And more health care services. We have been conditioned to believe that luxuries are a necessity, that we need things that most of the world doesn't even dream of having.

What we need is very little: a few changes of clothing, a pair of shoes, perhaps a few toiletries (toothpaste, deodorant, soap), some food, a roof over our heads. There are other things, I'm sure, that you could consider.

Q. What's the best thing about the group you volunteer with?

Four years after my stroke, while trying to recover and process everything that happened to me, I founded Different Strokes for Different Folks (for more, see opposite page) and quickly became aware of our volunteering opportunities. I'm determined not to let anyone go through the same horrible experience as I had. I remain one of four active Stroke Ambassadors and I play an active role in almost all of our campaigns.

Q. What could your project/organisation improve on doing?

Raising awareness about age and stroke.
Confusion still occurs around the age bracket of people who have strokes. This confusion occurs because there are still articles published that state that strokes in the young are "rare". Hence, people still shrug it off, saying "It won't happen to me - it only happens to the elderly".

Q. How long are you volunteering?

Three years now.

Q. How and why did you get involved?

I volunteered to change our community. To be willing to help a neighbour is what it's all about.

Volunteering empowers you.

Q. How can people change things?

The most influential voice in public policy is yours! We influence stroke-related policy by engaging decision-makers at every level of our government.

Telling your story can help others!

Q. What motivates you as a volunteer?

Volunteering is a great way for many people to move forward. I first started volunteering in 2016. I was unable to return to work and volunteering helped give me structure, purpose and build my confidence.

Volunteering makes you feel good and wanted. Plus it keeps us out of trouble!

LARRY ONLINE

Larry is very active on Facebook and an inspiring person to start your day with:

<http://bit.ly/LarryMasterson33>

The DSDF also has a Facebook page - simply google: [donegalstrokesupportgroup](#)

NOMINATE A VOLUNTEER!

If you wish to nominate a volunteer who you believe has an interesting story to tell, call the editor.



VOLUNTEER GROUP

Different Strokes for Different Folks

The voluntary support group 'Different Strokes for Different Folks' (DSDF) is for people between the ages of 18 and 65 who have experienced stroke or brain injury and live in Co. Donegal.

There are up to 50 stroke survivors living in the county and the group has established itself as a monthly fixture in the Silver Tassie Hotel in Letterkenny, Co. Donegal.

They meet on the last Wednesday of each month (from 11-1pm) and people come to share stories and offer peer support to each other.

As founder Larry Masterson, from Mountcharles, said, "Everyone in DSDF wants to help other stroke survivors, as they have been helped themselves and feel like they can give something back."

Larry was a national figure for years in efforts to bring people together to engage in social farming. In his day job, he was a social worker with the HSE.

His life experience stood to him after he had a stroke in 2014 and saw the need for a support group in the county for survivors.

HOW TO REMAIN POSITIVE

He initially had speech difficulty and cognitive issues following his stroke. His memory and speed were affected, as were the way in which he processed his thoughts, solved problems and managed complex daily activities.

Despite this he has been in recovery for the last few years and cites the support from his loving and brilliant wife Winifred and their son Patrick.

"I couldn't have done it without them," he said.

"As the days turned into months, I slowly began to realise that despite my best efforts, I was a different person. I began to accept my new challenges and limitations instead of continuing to fight what I knew in my heart to be true," Larry said.

Larry remained positive by learning to redefine a new sense of normality for himself. He changed his focus as he had graciously been given a second chance.

"My eyes were finally opened; each day truly is a gift and tomorrow is never, ever guaranteed," he said.

"No matter where you are on your own journey, live your life to the absolute fullest. The first step in doing so is learning to love the new you, no matter how broken or damaged you may feel"



• The monthly meetings for a cuppa give stroke survivors the chance to socialise in comfort.



• In the past, Larry Masterson (centre) used to organise meetings of social farmers and his experience stood to him in setting up the 'Different Strokes for Different Folks' support group.

A GROUP OF THEIR OWN

"When I returned home from hospital, even though I had good support from my family and from the HSE Therapy Services, it is still an isolating and challenging place to be," he said.

This motivated him to set up DSDF with fellow survivors Neil Sweeney and Kathleen O'Donnell.

It dawned on them from attending meetings with the community neurological rehabilitation team in Ballybofey that it would be beneficial if they were to form a group of their own to allow stroke survivors to meet up in a wider social setting for lunch.

A COMFORTABLE SPACE

Now, the DSDF's monthly meetings provide a comfortable space (in the sense that socialising can be difficult following a stroke as communication is affected). In the group, people can feel relaxed.

Although Larry - like others - was unable to return to work after his stroke, volunteering helped to give structure to his day and purpose to his life, and to build his confidence.

"I may not be able or ready yet to write newsletters... but I have a ray of positivity around me, I'm the greeter and I make everyone welcome on board. I makes sure no one in the group sits alone. That motivates me," he said.

LEARNING TO LOVE THE NEW YOU

"I have learned to take each day as it comes and to celebrate even the smallest of victories. When self-pity or depression tries to rear its ugly head, I simply close my eyes, put my hand over my heart and soak in the precious feeling of a beating heart.

"No matter where you are on your own journey, I just want to encourage you to live your life to the absolute fullest. The first step in doing so is learning to love the new you, no matter how broken or damaged you may feel," he said.

For more information, call the number or email (centre photo).

On FB: donegalstrokesupportgroup

On Twitter: @GroupDonegal

3 specialist publications with a s



RURAL WATER NEWS

Among Irish volunteers, there are people who have skills and knowledge that would no doubt match those of a qualified engineer. Local people involved in running Group Water Schemes are some of the most able, yet modest, volunteers in the country.

And many of them are avid readers of 'Rural Water News', a magazine - it's more than a newsletter - published thrice annually by the National Federation of Group Water Schemes.

WHAT'S SPECIAL HERE?

As well as looking at best practice in Ireland, 'Rural Water News' features 'Learning From Others'. For instance, the Winter 2018 edition covers a visit by Irish people to see a group water scheme in a rural area west of the city of Linz in Austria.

The magazine is both technical and community-focused and features plenty of photographs. The focus moves easily from groups of young people learning about water quality to stories and photos showing how best to drill a borehole.

There are also regional updates, national news and the latest from the EU that impacts on water schemes.

The Federation's website handily features an archive of its magazines going back to 2003. (The most recent edition has yet to be uploaded.)

READ IT HERE:

<http://www.nfgws.ie/RWN-Magazine>



ESF NEWSLETTER

The European Social Fund (ESF) has invested around €7 billion in Ireland since we joined the EU in 1973.

It is the EU's main instrument for investing in people and, to highlight its impact, the ESF in Ireland publishes an annual newsletter.

WHAT'S SPECIAL HERE?

The ESF Newsletter is a surprisingly accessible publication - with minimal EU jargon and programme talk. It could be read by anybody.

The newsletter features stories to inspire - accompanied by quality photographs - from local projects backed by Youthreach, the Garda Youth Diversion Programme, the National Adult Literacy Agency, the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme, and more.

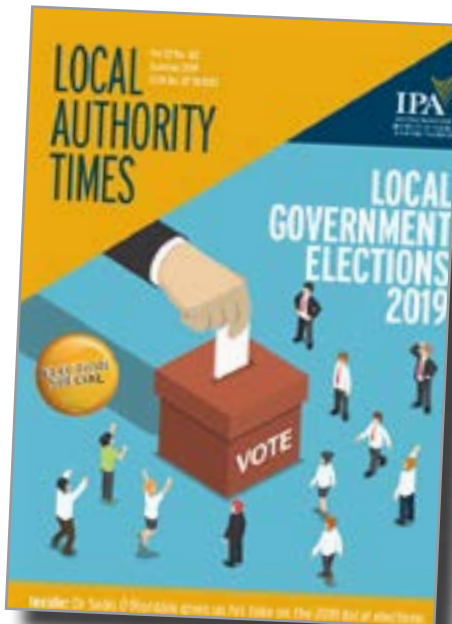
It includes updates on EU programmes such as the 'Ability Programme' and 'Springboard+'.

SUBMIT A STORY

Anyone is welcome to submit a piece for publication, particularly if you are involved in a project that is ESF-funded.

To propose an article for the 2019 newsletter (the early bird gets the worm) email: peil@education.gov.ie

DOWNLOAD: The 2018 edition ran to 42 pages. All 10 editions published since 2008 are available at: <https://www.esf.ie/en/Information-Centre/Communication/Newsletter/>



social inclusion focus



Laura Shannon @laushannon - Feb 7
Catching up Dóil debates on introducing #DirectlyElectedMayors to Ireland.
Article in a recent edition of Local Authority Times referenced by @JanOSullivanTD is a good read for those looking to know more about international models.
Free to read here: bit.ly/2BnKtno



LOCAL AUTHORITY TIMES

The 'L.A. Times' was quoted during a Dóil debate earlier this year by former minister, Jan O'Sullivan - she held the magazine high and referred to a feature inside on how other countries have successfully gone about directly electing city mayors.

WHAT'S SPECIAL HERE?

Established in 2009, the biannual 'Local Authority Times' (or 'L.A. Times') is published by the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) based in Dublin.

It's primary audience is the local authority sector, but much of its content would interest people in the Community and Voluntary Sector.

It is seen as a reliable source of information on such a range of topics that there is something that should interest readers in every edition. This summer, a new-look, more colourful Local Authority Times hopes to grab readers' attention while still producing in-depth, original research and analysis.

Editor Laura Shannon (pictured below) is interested in readers' views and welcomes comments, suggestions and ideas for topics that they should address.



• Laura Shannon, editor, has given the publication a new look.

READ IT HERE:

The publication is free to read: <https://bit.ly/2BnKtno>

The IPA's website also has unique resources on file in regard to public administration, social inclusion and development.

More info: Institute of Public Administration 57-61 Lansdowne Road, Dublin 4.

T: 01-240-3600.

E: lshannon@ipa.ie

Want privacy? Google can't tell what you're reading when you read something in print!

EPIC Programme

Sara Sue Rodriguez de Jolivet Peru to Ireland



Sara Sue Rodriguez de Jolivet (pictured above, and below in centre of group) was one of over 3,200 people from 101 nationalities who received 'EPIC'* support over the past decade. Of that number, 67% got jobs, joined a training course or became a volunteer.

Sara Sue said the 'EPIC' programme support helped her get her first job here and was "a life changing experience" for her. Today, 10 years on, she works in IT and gives over some of her spare time to deliver talks to people who are in the same shoes she once wore.

Her story appears in the 2018 European Social Fund (ESF) Newsletter. It goes to show that the EU has learned that statistics alone don't tell a story.

'EPIC' is one of the many ESF programmes benefitting people in Ireland. In this instance, it helped to integrate and change the life of an immigrant from Peru who came here with her partner.

The ESF Newsletter showcases projects it funds and updates readers on EU programme developments. For more, see left.

* The Employment for People from Immigrant Communities (EPIC) Programme supports migrants to become economically independent and more socially integrated in Ireland. Participants get pre-employment training, one-to-one support and work experience opportunities.

To find out more about the EPIC programme, or to participate, see: <https://www.bitc.ie/business-action-programmes/business-action-on-employment/are-you-a-jobseeker/>



Sara Sue (pictured centre) has also written of her experiences as an immigrant in Ireland on her LinkedIn page: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/you-expat-looking-job-survivor-kit-sara-sue-de-jolivet/>

#WorthFollowing

“HOW SOME PEOPLE ARE BLOODY BRILLIANT” by @MiaBeetle - Hear about the hotelier who improved life for one family by a simple gesture

Maria O'Dwyer tweets under the handle @MiaBeetle. She is an early childhood sociologist, researcher and logophile (nothing to do with trees) from Limerick and works with the Paul Partnership.

As a logophile - a lover of words - she despairs when people misuse words as her father did recently:

May 30:

When your Luddite father announces - in front of your mother - that he is 'going to master this Tinder yoke by the weekend' #HeMeansTwitter #WithoutaSmartphone

She tweets mostly on social issues connected with her work. Her views on early childhood learning (she has a PhD on the subject) are worth hearing and can challenge prevailing practice and wisdom.

In May, she posted a thread of tweets about a simple act of generosity involving a hotelier and long-stay guests.



*** TWO YEARS AGO ***

2 years ago I did some research with young children living in emergency accommodation (hotels). One little girl (5) spoke repeatedly about missing the smell of home. Her mom later explained that it was a particular fabric softener that she always used on bedclothes.

Afterwards, during a feedback session with the hotel staff (with the permission of the children & parents I interviewed) I mentioned this as an example of how home has so many different meanings, especially to children.

*** LAST WEEKEND ***

Last weekend I met the mom of that little girl (now living in their 'forever home') who told me that the hotel manager asked her what fabric she used and for the 17 weeks they were in the hotel after the consultation with the children, their bedclothes 'smelt just like home'.

*** TODAY ***

This morning I called the hotel manager to tell him just how much that meant to the family. He told me that he was honoured to do 'something so small for young children in the middle of something so big & cruel'.

#ListenToChildren

Worth following: @MiaBeetle



Galway has a new strategy for equality & human rights

Members of special policy committees of Galway City Council now aim to live up to an 'Equality and Human Rights Statement' that the city's Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) signed off on last October.

"This statement serves to address our obligations under the Irish Human Rights Equality and Commission Act 2014 to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and protect human rights," say the authors.

This is the first LCDC in the country - as far as we are aware - to agree on such a statement. It aims to be "a tool to support Implementation of the Public Sector Duty to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect human rights."

The Galway City LCDC Equality and Human Rights Statement was adopted on October 17th last, a notable date as it is also the UN's International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

Galway City Council has frequently been criticised for its poor treatment of Travellers in the city.

Galway City LCDC is responsible for planning, coordinating, and monitoring local development and community development programmes and funding in the city.

It is now dedicated to equality and human rights, motivated by a set of shared values: dignity, autonomy, participation, inclusion, social justice and environmental justice.

In relation to 'environmental justice', the statement holds authorities to account for not having regard for "climate change and its impacts, in particular on marginalised groups and communities".

The LCDC's work in drafting and adopting the statement was made possible by a grant from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission under its Human Rights and Equality Grants Scheme. The committee hired Niall Crowley of Values Lab to facilitate the process.

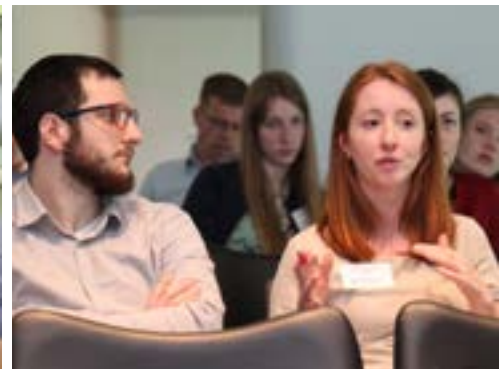
To download the Strategy: <http://bit.ly/GalwayLCDC-HumanRights>

POVERTY & POLICY

Social Inclusion Forum



Aviva Stadium, May 22, 2019



PHOTOS BY: A. MEAGHER.

Between 1993 and 2016, Greenland lost an average of of ice per year, and Antarctica lost about half that

25

286 billion tonnes
again. – NASA

POVERTY & POLICY

KEY MESSAGES AT THE 2019 SOCIAL INCLUSION FORUM

The closing date for submissions to the government's new strategy to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion was March 2018. By May of this year, when around 150 people met in Dublin for the annual Social Inclusion Forum (SIF), the final 'National Action Plan for Social Inclusion' had still not been published.

Prior to the gathering in the Aviva Stadium, 110 people had met in several locations around the country to discuss social inclusion issues and to talk about what the plan, or strategy, should provide.

The attendees included representatives of groups working at grassroots level and people with direct experience of poverty and exclusion.

These SIF preparatory workshops – jointly organised by the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) and Community Work Ireland (CWI) – also gave people a chance to vent frustration. One issue was inadequate consultations.

"The lack of consultation during the development phase of the strategy... goes against national and international requirements to consult with stakeholders," reads the summary report released by EAPN and CWI.

At this stage, however they were willing to put up with it if it meant having a plan, though they laid down conditions.

POSITIVES

The most positively viewed developments were:

- The signing of the Irish Sign Language Act 2017 into law in early 2018 was important.

- The effort to re-establish the network of social inclusion officers in each government department was welcomed.

- Local community development committees (LCDCs) while not perfect, were seen also in a positive light.

- Collaborative approaches to implementing policy are gaining traction. 'Healthy Ireland' initiatives were highlighted as a good example of what can be achieved when a collaborative approach is taken.

LCDCs

Opinion was mixed on the relatively new LCDCs and the Public Participation Networks.



• A participant addresses policy-makers at the Social Inclusion Forum.

PHOTO BY: A. MEAGHER.

The importance of the Traveller voice was stressed, and participants felt that there should be an independent Traveller organisation in every area.

Some felt that, while they were not perfect, the LCDCs were an attempt to foster collaboration at local level. Others felt that the LCDCs were merely an added layer in an already bureaucratic system.

PARTICIPATION

Generally, Public Participation Networks (PPNs) were not seen as bottom-up structures or mechanisms for participation.

Many community groups join a PPN because it is often a criterion for accessing funding. This gives the illusion of higher support for, and interest in PPNs, than is actually the case.

The summary highlighted a quote from one person who felt "criticism of them is not taken well."

MEASURING POVERTY

"Measures of poverty are focused on the symptoms, rather than the causes, of poverty and social exclusion," said one workshop participant.

Another person, calling for new ways to measure poverty, said: "Not being able to afford something is one thing but what if you can't access it in the first place?"

COMMUNITY

DEVELOPMENT

It was highlighted that if the voices of marginalised communities are to be heard, there needs to be a strengthening of participation and of the voice of representative groups.

The importance of the Traveller voice was stressed. Participants felt that there should be an independent Traveller organisation in every area.

There was strong agreement that marginalised communities have been disempowered; that they have become the recipients of services, rather than being supported to be active participants in their own communities and in decision that affect them.

HOUSING

The pre-forum workshops acknowledged that housing and accommodation were the biggest issues facing people in Ireland, and that government policy in the area was not working effectively.

Rent caps were called for to address the problem of unaffordable and rising rents.

HEALTH

Action is needed to improve Traveller health and wellbeing. Poor conditions that many Travellers face – such as discrimination as a barrier to accessing education and

employment – have a large impact on this.

The link between poverty and mental illness (and other health issues) was discussed, with participants calling for better access to primary and community care.

DISABILITY

People with disabilities still face many barriers to full participation, including the cost of disability, transport issues, inaccessibility of services, and barriers they put up after years of being conditioned to have low expectations for themselves.

There were calls for more supports for people with disabilities – particularly those who want to become entrepreneurs – and for the mainstreaming of the three-year Ability programme.

EMPLOYMENT

Participants felt that JobPath had been given priority and was undermining the quality engagement with people and their lives that is to be found through programmes such as Community Employment and Tús.

DATA BLINDNESS

Participants believed that too much emphasis is placed on targets and quantitative data, with many saying that they do not take account of local circumstances or the hidden nature of poverty.

CONSENSUS ON SOLUTIONS

There was consensus that addressing poverty at a structural level must involve:

- examining wealth and its redistribution,
- investing in quality and affordable services,
- and it can only be addressed by a whole-of-government approach.

This is a brief account of the CWI and EAPN pre-forum workshop summary report.

Concerns over Brexit, racism, carers, isolation and other matters were also laid out in the full 4-page report which is available online: <http://bit.ly/cwi-eapn-pre-SIF>

Doherty promises “ambitious” plan & “kicks in rear” to see targets met

Minister Regina Doherty addressed the Social Inclusion Forum 2019, stressing that she was there to really listen and that a long-awaited social inclusion strategy, or roadmap, will be published “very, very shortly”.

“Today, we genuinely are here to listen,” Minister Doherty said at the outset.

Her job and that of her officials in the Department of Employment, Activation and Social Protection was, she said, “to absolutely listen to what you have to say and heed it”.

“When we hear what you have to say and the importance of why you have to say it, our responsibility is to ensure that it feeds into our policy and decisions.”

She made the distinction between listening and hearing and guaranteed her audience that the energy that went into their pre-forum workshops was “time well spent”.

“While I can’t deliver everything you ask for, every year, I hope you see your positive input in the budget delivered last year... and the impact it makes in the lives of the people you represent.”

She recalled that the first roadmap for social inclusion was developed in 1997. At that time, it was called an Anti-Poverty Strategy and it aimed to make poverty reduction a key objective across all government departments.

“Their main objective was to think consistently about the most marginalised people,” she said.

Since then, successive governments have developed a series of sectoral plans.

We have the ‘National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy’, ‘Better Options, Brighter Futures’, the ‘National Carers Strategy’, the strategy for improving the lives of children.

“Probably most successful was the National Disability Inclusion Strategy,” she said.

The minister pointed also to other ministerial posts dedicated to tackling exclusion and



• Minister Regina Doherty speaking at the Social Inclusion Forum 2019. PHOTO BY: A. MEAGHER.

promoting equality.

However, one department is required to set the lead.

“Much as I value the work carried out by other departments, there has to be an overarching department to paint the big picture, to lead from the front and to also be the person who is at the back giving a kick in the rear end when we sit down to do our quarterly meetings arising from the National Social Inclusion Strategy, to make sure those targets are met, to let those responsible know that they’re not just responsible to you, but to the rest of the people who are going to put their names to the targets and deadlines in the roadmap.”

“So, what is our final destination?” she asked.

She compared her “roadmap” to Richard Bruton’s ‘Action Plan for Jobs’ which she said worked because, “on a quarterly basis, the people responsible for delivering those actions

had to sit around a table and either defend why they hadn’t (acted) or take the praise when they did.”

The new Social Inclusion Strategy, will have “a very, very clear statement of ambition” to reduce consistent poverty to 2%.

“We’re going to go beyond by making a statement that Ireland will be - and our targets are to be - the most socially inclusive state in the European Union.

“This will be a plan with clear goals and specific commitments and I intend to publish a roadmap which explicitly sets out the department responsible for each commitment and what the timelines are.

“This will help all of these departments to understand what they need to do to deliver on these commitments and, just as importantly, it will hold them to account for playing their role in delivering on our shared ambition.

“Through existing plans, the various departments are already beginning to sound the right tunes in terms of inclusion, but every orchestra needs a conductor and the roadmap will lead the way,” she said.

Pointing out that 6,500 people in her department work “on the frontline in the main”, she nonetheless appreciated the up-close relationships that development workers establish with people.

“It is you that hear the real emotional stories of people’s real-life situations,” she said, saying that was why their views were sought to “shape our policies so that we do it right”.

She said these views will be reflected in the new plan and said she intended “to bring the roadmap for social inclusion to government in the next couple of weeks.”

The strategy was originally due out last year. Stakeholders were still waiting for its publication as we went to print.

CHANGING IRELAND a hit in Korea & Japan



• Irish officials on an agri-food trade mission to South Korea and Japan never had a dull moment, thanks to *Irish Examiner* and *Evening Echo* journalist, Rob McNamara.

• Rob cut his teeth with ‘Changing Ireland’ and brought his copy of the latest edition with him while on assignment with the delegation. It was fought over by officials desperate for a break from talking about beef. Rob is pictured (left) in June, in Seoul, hanging onto his copy for dear life!

• Send us a selfie or yourself and ‘Changing Ireland’ in an interesting location! Cheers Rob!



Let's open 800 'Pub Hubs'

- Hubs by day and pubs by night / Viable any place with a Tidy Towns

- Look at all the buildings in your area, not just those that are vacant.
- Think of buildings not often in use, or only in use for particular times in the day.
- Not every village, town or suburb can easily build a new facility and this article might open your eyes to new possibilities.

By PAT KENNEDY, eTOWNS

Ireland could develop a network of 800-plus 'Community Innovation Hubs' by using pubs as the bricks and mortar for the network. These hubs could operate as community hubs by day and pubs by night.

'Pub Hubs' could provide hotdesk space for small businesses and local community groups could make great use of the facilities - while it's great when there is a local community centre available, this is often not the case in smaller towns.

As a benchmark, every town and village in Ireland with a Tidy Towns committee has the necessary community drive, cohesion and collective thinking to make this work. And there is barely a village in Ireland without a pub.

So, how could we go about creating 800-850 community innovation hubs in Ireland? Post offices, restaurants, vacant shop units and former church premises could operate as Community Innovation Hubs, but pubs appeal for a number of reasons.

They are usually recognised as community assets and their owners are often searching for fresh ideas. They have phone lines, internet (in many cases), toilet facilities and insurance and many can provide food.



• A typical Irish streetscape, in Kilrush, Co. Clare.

Modest grants could help pubs put in place the necessary infrastructure, e.g. projectors, better broadband connection, electrical points, office-style seating.

With a relatively small investment, Pub Hubs could provide the following services:

- Centralised call answering and secretarial services.
- Parcel collection / delivery point.
- Meeting rooms, showrooms.
- Fast broadband connection.
- Community support services.
- Childcare facilities.
- Training.

The list goes on.

Publicans do not necessarily need to run the innovation hubs. Others could manage the hubs by day on a voluntary or paid basis. And to work on a large scale, Pub Hubs would have to appeal to publicans and the application process should be straightforward.

Alongside local community groups and publicans, other key stakeholders - the network of Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) and the representative bodies for publicans - would need to get behind the idea. They would benefit. Pub Hubs could provide meeting places in each county for LEOs and others to work with, and run, training for multiple local businesses in a central location.

So that's the idea. Communities may wonder how to begin. What steps should they take?

There are less than ten community shops in Ireland and they are a great idea too, but need more support at national level.

Of course, there is nothing to stop a community taking a bottom-up approach and showing the rest of us how a Pub Hub would work. Who will be the first to try?

An expanded version of this article offers further suggestions and is available on a google doc for comment: <http://bit.ly/PubHub800>

Your views are most welcome.

AVIVA STADIUM, DUBLIN

Social Inclusion Forum puts down marker to radically reduce poverty by 2025

On an overcast day in the Aviva Stadium, Dublin, the shouts of kids on the pristine pitch drifted through the open doors into a far more sober atmosphere.

It was the 2019 Social Inclusion Forum, and representatives from the community and voluntary sector, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP), the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) and Community Work Ireland (CWI) were gathered to debate the finer points of a new strategy on social inclusion.

After Dermot Coates (DEASP) presented key points, Minister Regina Doherty took the podium to highlight some aims: a focus on reducing levels of consistent poverty to 2% or less, and making Ireland the most socially inclusive State in the European Union.

Minister Doherty spoke about the importance of consultation to development of the strategy, saying, "We want to hear what you have to say, but also to heed what you have to say... The next job is for me to sit down, shut up, and listen."

She made promises too: "The new social inclusion strategy will set out real goals and



• See also pages 25-27.

Photo by: A. Meagher.

real timelines, so those working in the sector will be able to hold us accountable."

CWI's Ann Irwin and EAPN's Paul Ginnell were quick to point out areas in which the strategy could be improved, however, as well as failings in the consultation process. Irwin spoke particularly strongly about how little input groups had had in the process:

"We've been waiting for the consultation for a long time," she said, "and we will welcome it when it comes, but it hasn't come yet. The new strategy is already done and dusted, and shows very little effort at consultation - at least that we've seen."

When attendees broke into workshops, groups highlighted the exclusion of disabled people from the consultation process and the need to give Travellers and those with mental health difficulties a stronger voice.

The DEASP team at the forum acknowledged holes in the existing strategy, with Jacqui McCrum speaking honestly: "Following feedback, and listening to lots of the issues being raised today, we know we need to do more work to get (the strategy) right."

So where does this leave us? Coates delivered the line that will likely be remembered most clearly by those present: "If by 2025 (the end of the new strategy period) we haven't overcome the issues that we're facing today, we will have failed."

- Kirsty Tobin