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Issue 66 - Autumn 2019

NOT FOR PROFIT

CHANGING IRELAND

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

PEOPLE POWER AT THE PLOUGHING

8,600 Volunteer spaces

Millions in funding

Strangers on boards best!

Top tips



Mahatma Gandhi's 150th

Free poster from Monaghan Co Co



It's not all about harnessing horses!

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.

ISSN 1649-5985

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UPDATE: News resource

'Changing Ireland's new website launched by Minister Ring

The Minister for Rural and Community Development, **Michael Ring**, launched our new website - www.changingireland.ie - to complement the work by 'Changing Ireland', on September 19th.

The Minister said: "'Changing Ireland' is a unique publication which is based in a community setting, in Moyross, Limerick. It is a high quality news magazine which has encouraged all involved for nearly two decades to work harder for the betterment of our communities.

"'Changing Ireland' is supported by a voluntary board and it provides mentoring to aspiring young journalists from Moyross residents to refugees fleeing Yemen. And well before it became popular, the magazine began going green.

"Good practice nationwide has been enhanced by 'Changing Ireland's' work. Now with a fabulous new website at its disposal, the project should be able to increase its output and reach more people in the Community and Voluntary sector.

"Community is at the heart of what my Department does and I am pleased to officially launch the new website and to congratulate 'Changing Ireland' for collaborating with eTownz to build this website at no cost. May you make good use of it!"

"For nearly two decades, 'Changing Ireland' has kept the flag flying at community level for grassroots organisations, volunteers, workers and local and central government bodies and

agencies working in communities. Long may you continue to catalogue and report on the good work going on nationwide that we might otherwise not hear of," said the Minister.



• Minister Michael Ring (centre) with Changing Ireland editor Allen Meagher (left) and Padraic Sweeney of the Department of Rural and Community Development.

PHOTOS BY: DANNY ROWAN.



• Some of our board members – Jude Meaney, Cathy Jones (chair), George Clancy (vice-chair) and Andrew O'Byrne. PHOTO BY: KIRSTY TOBIN.



COVER PHOTO

For details, see page 20.



• Adam Jackman and Pat Kennedy of eConcepts and eTownz with Kirsty Tobin from 'Changing Ireland' at a website meeting. PHOTO BY: A. MEAGHER.

WE BELIEVE IN DEVELOPMENT

Welcoming the development, **Cathy Jones**, chairperson of Changing Ireland Community Media CLG, said:

"In 'Changing Ireland' we believe in the principles of community development - seeking social change, empowering people, encouraging participation, collective action and campaigning for equality and social justice.

"We believe 'Changing Ireland' has captured much of the good that happens across Ireland. Being locally based, we try to reflect views on the ground and, while we promote the positive and best practice, we also provide a platform for people who will call out local or central government - among others - when the need arises.

"I would like to congratulate all who support 'Changing Ireland' past and present - our readers, contributors, occasional volunteers, our host community, fellow board members and, equally importantly the Department of Rural and Community Development," she said.

SPIRIT OF ACTIVISM

Allen Meagher, editor, said, "Community development by its nature seeks to confront power imbalances in society, so this is an interesting space to work in. And, for me, nothing matches the spirit of activism and volunteering that shores up so many vital services in this country. Those who engage in community development perform a critical role in pushing at local and national level for social change," he said.

BACKGROUND

'Changing Ireland' magazine has been publishing quarterly for 18 years. The publication shines a spotlight on good practice in the community and voluntary sector and challenges community work practitioners to always strive to do better. It also provides a platform to debate and challenge government policy.

Moved

This year, the community media project moved with financial support from the Department of Rural and Community Development to new offices in the community centre in Moyross.

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'.

SUPPORT

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



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Tuaithe agus Pobail
Department of Rural and
Community Development

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www.changingireland.ie



UN DAYS NOVEMBER

- 2 International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists.
- 6 International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict.
- 10 World Science Day for Peace and Development.
- 14 World Diabetes Day.
- 16 International Day for Tolerance.
- 17 World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims.
- 19 World Toilet Day.
- 20 Universal Children's Day.
- 20 Africa Industrialization Day.
- 21 World Philosophy Day.
- 25 International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.
- 29 International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

DECEMBER

- 1 World AIDS Day.
- 2 International Day for the Abolition of Slavery.
- 3 International Day of Persons with Disabilities.
- 5 International Volunteer Day.
- 5 World Soil Day.
- 9 International Anti-Corruption Day.
- 9 World Genocide Commemoration Day.
- 10 Human Rights Day.
- 11 International Mountain Day.
- 18 International Migrants Day.
- 18 Arabic Language Day.
- 20 International Human Solidarity Day.



NEWS, VIEWS & ARCHIVE

econcepts

PEOPLE POWER! SEIZE THE DAY!



While 'Changing Ireland' likes to promote the positive, we do so knowing that extreme poverty continues to flourish in pockets of society.

We know suicide rates are rising, for instance among

Travellers. Discrimination is partly to blame.

We know climate change is going to cost us dearly one way or another.

It is in this context that we urge you to engage, participate, join a group, start a group and seek social change.

People power is growing. Witness the protests recently by poorly-paid farmers, by Extinction Rebellion campaigners, by hospital reformers, and by people unhappy with having refugees brought at short notice and without consultation to live in their communities.

People power, properly harnessed, can be a force for positive social change through collective action. It has the potential to empower those protesting while holding those

in power to account.

Even when it does not achieve its ultimate aim, it still helps to identify issues.

Around 100,000 people protested on the streets of Dublin in the lead-up to the US war on Iraq. While Ireland as a country protested, the State continued to subtly support the US war by providing airplane landing facilities.

But people's feelings were made clear and small protests over Shannon have continued ever since.

The Ploughing Championships provided an opportunity to meet many busy civil society actors in a relaxed setting.

Surrounded by shiny, new tractors, I met in Carlow with everyone from Tasc think-tank staff to Peace-funded radio station presenters and a team from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

They were all there to connect with the public, as were staff from the Department of Rural and Community Development and support agencies such as Pobal. Other government departments that support communities also had a strong presence.

From visiting their stands, it is clear that the number of funding programmes is growing and support is there from local development companies and others to help small

community groups make funding applications.

As Pobal's Richard Deane explains (page 16) the funding is within reach. Your group just needs to be patient.

Thankfully, there is more support coming. The Government has signed off on a five-year strategy to support the community, voluntary and charity sectors. The report is well worth a read. If followed to the letter, Ireland would become an especially inclusive place to live. It's up to us to push for that to happen.

Think about becoming a community development worker in your area. Think about becoming an activist. Help your community find its collective voice. You don't need a qualification to get started. Just take inspiration from the stories of others told on these pages and from our archive of 18 years of journalism now available once again on our revamped website.

Let us know how it goes!

Allen Meagher

FILE A REPORT FOR US!

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



Published By:

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

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Production:

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Editorial Team: Viv Sadd, Jude Meaney, Kirsty Tobin, Robert Carey, Joe Saunders, Paul Geraghty/Bernie Reape and Allen Meagher.

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

Printed by: Davis Printers, Limerick.

Voluntary Board of Directors: Cathy Jones (chair), George Clancy (vice), Seamus McGiff (sec), Jude Meaney, Andrew O'Byrne, Jason Craig and Danielle Hickey.

Thanks To . . .

'Changing Ireland' thanks everyone involved in the production of Issue 66.



DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this magazine are those of the author concerned. They do not, by any means, necessarily reflect the views of the editor, the editorial team, the voluntary management board of Changing Ireland Community Media CLG, or the Department of Rural & Community Development.

GRASSROOTS

SEAN & RUAIRÍ'S ROUND IRELAND TRIPS

- Ruairí hitched for hope: Sean drove for 'a just transition'

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

In 1997, a British man took on a £100 bet. His friends bet that there was no way he would hitch-hike around Ireland with a fridge for a month.

It proved to be a great way to get to know this country.

On completing the tour with his fridge, and collecting the £100, Tony Hawks wrote a book that became a best-seller. It told the stories of the ordinary Irish people and places he encountered on his travels. In 2010, 'Round Ireland with a Fridge' was released as a film.

Possibly inspired by Hawks, two social change activists have in recent years embarked on meet-the-people tours of the country.

In 2013, Ruairí McKiernan set off on a 'Hitching for Hope' listening tour where he recorded people's voices, visions, hopes and dreams. He chatted with people from all walks of life as he passed through 17 counties. At a time when Ireland was on its knees after years of bad economic decision-making, he found evidence to give us hope for the future. He was never left standing, nor left stuck for a bed for a night.

"All over, I heard tales of hope and triumph," he wrote at the time. "There is the young farmer who will fight on for the sake of his kids; the 50-year-old unemployed man who is

retraining in forestry; the young graduate who believes political change is possible; and the social entrepreneur who is setting up a food and energy localisation movement," he wrote.

Ruairí did 28 radio interviews during his tour and blogged about his experiences on the road.

Many of the stories he recorded were harsh.

"Many are giving up on this country. They don't have hope and have taken to despair, drinking or emigration in order to survive... There is a real sense that Ireland is a two-tier State, with one law for the rich and powerful and another for the rest of us."

However, Ruairí regained his faith in Ireland from meeting people who were taking action at local level.

"It is through a return to community values that many of us are re-imagining the country from the ground up, finding light in the darkness," he said.

Ruairí is the founder of the highly successful youth advocacy organisation Spunout (spunout.ie) and, a year before his trip, he had been appointed a member of President Higgins' first Council of State. Nonetheless, Ruairí travelled independently, not backed by any organisation. He has now finished a book based on his hitching tour and it is scheduled for publication in early 2020.

This September, a 'just transition' activist set off on a similar venture, this time by van, to find out how prepared Ireland is for reducing our CO2 emissions in a way that is fair to



• NICE PLACE TO WORK: Sean McCabe's work station while touring in his van in September to learn from rural Irish communities. PHOTO: @SeanMcCabe_Ind

everyone. Sean McCabe went on tour as part of his research work with the policy think-tank Tasc (and the Foundation for European Progressive Studies).

"I wanted to figure out how co-operative approaches to climate action in Ireland might help rural communities build local wealth, create jobs and provide opportunities that will keep more young people in rural communities," said Sean.

"It's called 'The Just Transition' - ensuring fair and equitable climate action that does not hurt workers and their communities."

Like Ruairí, Sean was met with kindness and generosity on the road which he said will be his "lasting impression from this trip".

He also witnessed the inequality and saw the potential of engaging communities.

"We live in a beautiful country, but it is also unequal," he said.

He wanted to hear about "what a fair transition for communities in rural Ireland means".

"I met over 50 farmers, community representatives, environmentalists, councillors, butchers, bakers, publicans and priests - the list goes on."

He told RTÉ listeners how it went. After covering 4,000km in 16 days, Sean reflected at Malin Head, Co. Donegal, on what he'd seen:

"Serious planning is required if we are going to succeed in tackling climate change in a way that is fair and respects everyone's right to a decent standard of living," he said.

Fuelled by learning from Sean's tour, Tasc will push for a just transition.

Perhaps Ruairí and Sean will repeat their trips in the future, but it's never easy: In 2017, Tony Hawks set off to repeat his trip and write a new book, but personal circumstances interrupted his plans and, in the rush home, he left his fridge behind.

Out of interest, Sean's van was equipped with a fridge (and a stove).

Finally, if you're wondering why he travelled in a diesel van when he's concerned about climate change, tune into our next edition.

Sean blogs at: www.tasc.ie/blog
You can follow Ruairí here:
<https://www.ruairimckiernan.com>



• ON THE ROAD: Ruairí McKiernan in 2013, blinded by the sun in County Clare, where he now lives. PHOTO BY: A. MEAGHER



• Tony Hawks on his return to Ireland with a new fridge in 2017.

INSPIRE A NATION: **Awesome People**

Brigid Quilligan

Community worker & activist

INTERVIEW BY: RAY LUCEY

What's the last film you saw?
'Fight Like a Butterfly'.

Person you most admire?
My mother.

The top four issues in Ireland today?

1. Racism.
2. Mental health of Travellers.
3. Lack of autism services.
4. Classism.

Nationally, we need more...

...Diversity in politics - meaning representation from people with different ethnicities and backgrounds.
And devolve all local Traveller accommodation powers to one national agency.

I strongly believe we need a State apology for the treatment of Travellers by the State; an acknowledgement of what that treatment was. Then we need a peace and reconciliation process within the community.

Nationally, we need less...

...Parish-pump politics.

What's the best thing about the project you volunteer with?

The solidarity here at Kerry Travellers' Health Community Development Project and the common purpose of our team and volunteers. We all are passionate about human rights.

What could your project improve on doing?

Promoting our work and reaching families we currently do not work with.

How long are you volunteering?

I have volunteered with community groups and campaigns for 30 years.

How and why did you get involved?

I realised that if change is going to come, those afflicted by oppression have to be the ones to demand it.

What difference has being involved made to you?

It has influenced my life and exposed me to different communities.

Have things changed for your community since you became involved?

Traveller ethnicity is now recognised. We have a stronger Traveller voice. The recognition by UNESCO of Traveller language - Gammon - in July was a momentous achievement. More young people are in education.



What motivates you as a volunteer?

I see too many young people from my community dying. We need to change policy, practice and legislation so that it includes and is led by the marginalised.

I love to see young people reaching their full potential and developing their skills and enterprise.

What inspires you?

Our youth is a very inspiring group; the discrimination that they face is much worse than the discrimination their parents faced. They are subjected to anti-Travellerism on social media, in schools and shops, when accessing services. They are constantly made to justify their existence as Travellers. They are bright, educated, articulate, and they will be the ones to create a new Ireland.

How do you get new volunteers?

By telling our truthful story. We are credible. We know and love our community - that inspires people.

What brings about change?

People say they want change, but they do nothing to create that change; we collude in our own oppression. Civil rights are being impacted on every day, so why are we so silent? Change can only come when communities come together.

QUILLIGAN ONLINE

Twitter: @BrigidQuilligan

NOMINATE A VOLUNTEER!

If you wish to nominate a volunteer, activist or otherwise remarkable person, email: editor@changingireland.ie

The country supported the Ryans; the State didn't

“In 2011, charges were brought against one individual for online hate crime... Three factors led to the court case proceeding.”

A family of five is posed behind a shopping cart filled with various groceries. From left to right: an older man with glasses and a grey jacket, a woman in a patterned top, a woman in a dark top holding a young child in a red shirt, and a man in a light blue patterned shirt. The shopping cart is overflowing with items like vegetables, fruits, and packaged goods. The background is plain white.

WITNESS PROUD:
“We accomplished Something”

Mary Boyne appeared as a witness in the court case and despite the outcome of the case she was “happy with where we got to.”



PAVEE POINT:
“Disappointed” with outcome

Pavee Point director Martin Collins said after the court case, “We are disappointed there wasn’t a prosecution, it might send out a message that this is acceptable behaviour, that you personally had experienced an increase in hate after the anti-Traveller Facebook page was set up.”

“It was an inadequate way of measuring if there was an increase

[illegible]

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W: kerrytravellersproject.wordpress.com

INCLUSION

BALLYHAUNIS SEMINAR ON 'EMBRACING DIVERSITY'

A free seminar was held on Friday, Oct 18th, that showed how, with relative ease, a small town in the West of Ireland more than doubled in population.

The seminar, in Ballyhaunis, Co. Mayo, was held "to examine and chart what has been achieved in the area of intercultural integration in a small town".

It took place as part of National Social Inclusion Awareness Week (Oct 14-20th).

Speakers included Seán Óg Ó hAilpín who told of his personal experiences as a Fijian Irish man, hurler and Gaelic footballer.

While the event was bookended by government representatives - Minister of State David Stanton opened proceedings and Minister Michael Ring closed the seminar - the day's discussions were led by people from the community, in business, migrants, civil society groups and academics.

Embracing diversity seems to have been good for Ballyhaunis and the holding of the event points to the fact that, despite taking the unpopular approach of moving refugee applicants without consultation into small rural towns, the government has a desire to understand how best to support integration.

Recommendations will be made, following the event, to map an integrated future for the town and towns of similar composition.

The seminar was supported by South West Mayo Development Company and the Department of Rural and Community Development.

We will carry a full report in our next issue. See our website for video coverage and more.



• Speakers included Cork legend, Seán Óg Ó hAilpín (above), Anastasia Crickley, Dr Veronica Cassidy, Dr Tony Barrett, Dr Orla McGarry, Julie Daniel and many people from Ballyhaunis.

NATIONAL: Government policy

BOTTOM-UP DEVELOPMENT

-Government's first strategy to support work sees long-awaited recognition of

The long-awaited Government strategy to support the Community and Voluntary Sector has been published and launched to acclaim.

Sector representatives from Community Work Ireland (CWI) and the Irish Local Development Network (ILDN), among others, were at the official launch in Rialto, Dublin, by Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring.

He promised that the government will listen to communities and development will "be from the bottom-up, not the top-down".

Both CWI and the ILDN sat on the cross-sectoral group that co-produced the plan: 'Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: A five-year strategy to support the community and voluntary sector in Ireland 2019-2024'.

ILDN chairperson Marie Price Bolger highlighted the strategy's commitment to a renewed community-statutory partnership.

"The recognition that such partnership must be underpinned by strong, autonomous community development and local development structures has allowed the strategy to reconceive of the state's relationship with civil society. As a cross-government document, this is welcome," she said.



• Above: Attendees at the launch in Rialto.

The ILDN also welcomed government's recognition of their work with long-term unemployed people. The strategy states that it "would be almost impossible for central government to replicate" this work.

Meanwhile, CWI has teamed up with a range of organisations to organise seminars about the new strategy. So far, they have held events in Meath and Tipperary, with ones to come in Longford and Galway.

The seminars aim to discuss the actions that are best prioritised for implementation under the new strategy.

After the long wait, it is now all systems go!

- Report & photos by A. Meagher

THE VISION

The new five-year Strategy's vision is:

"To create vibrant, sustainable, inclusive, empowered and self-determining communities that support the social, cultural and economic well-being of all members."

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Independence is also important because, at times, we need to be able to criticize agencies when they are not serving our community well. Sometimes we work in partnership with the local authority, but sometimes we need to call it when they are not doing

what they are supposed to be doing.

- excerpt from the Strategy by Galway Traveller Movement on the importance of autonomy.

DOWNLOAD THE STRATEGY

To download the report: bit.ly/2UcUknS



• Bairbre Nic Aongusa, Assistant Secretary, speaking.



• Department officials involved in developing the strategy, with Minister Ring.

DEVELOPMENT PROMISED

Support community, voluntary & charity of the sector's value



• **Cameron, Sean and Graham** wanted to know what it was all about. On August 28th, the Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring, was in Rialto, Dublin, to launch a five-year strategy to support the community and voluntary sector in Ireland.

10 TAKEAWAYS FROM 48 PAGES

1. The strategy sets out a vision for communities in Ireland with named actions to be implemented over the next five years.
2. In signing off on the strategy, the Government is saying it “recognises the importance of the community and voluntary sector to a healthy, just and prosperous society”.
3. The 48-page publication details: the community and voluntary sector’s values and principles; current socio-economic challenges; and, the historical and policy contexts.
4. It points out that there are an estimated 29,000 non-profit organisations in Ireland. More than a million people actively volunteer annually. The economic value of the sector is tens of billions.
5. The strategy “sets a general direction of travel” for Government policy in relation to community development, local development and the community and voluntary sector.
6. The importance of autonomy in community development is emphasised. Case studies show the importance of community development. The case studies (from Kerry, Galway and Dublin) also focus on community based initiatives by local authorities and on local development.
7. After 2016 consultations over the Government’s ‘Framework Policy for Local and Community Development’, a “cross-sectoral group on local and community development” was set up in 2017 to develop the strategy.
8. The group had the following membership: Dept. of Rural and Community Development (3 reps); Irish Local Development Network (3); Community Work Ireland (2); Local government (2); Dept. of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (2); Dept. of Justice and Equality (1); Dept. of Health (1); NUI Maynooth (1); Ivan Cooper (The Wheel) and Ronnie Fay (Pavee Point).
9. The publication is historic. This is the first time government has an agreed national strategy to support the sector and communities nationwide.
10. It’s a good read - accessible, colourful and fact-filled. It tells of relatively recent hard times in the sector and for communities, explains all that is new in recent years and points towards a better future.

RING IN RIALTO



• Ann Irwin, Liam McGlynn, Minister Michael Ring, and Rachel Doyle. Ann and Rachel work with Community Work Ireland (CWI). Liam is a member of CWI’s central group.



• Minister Michael Ring and Joe Saunders, CEO of the Irish Local Development Network.



• Community worker Joe Donohue, Rialto, told his community’s story. He welcomed the new national strategy.



• Minister of State Catherine Byrne and Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring.

CHILDCARE

COMMUNITY CHILDCARE IS DIFFERENT

- A third of crèches are community-run

BY PATRICK KELLEHER

An RTÉ investigation into crèches run by a private chain called Hyde and Seek in July has left parents across Ireland nervous about leaving their children in childcare facilities. These concerns place parents in an impossible situation – most need to work, but many are left worrying that crèches are not meeting their children’s needs.

The stunning investigation – in which the national broadcaster sent undercover reporters in as childcare workers – found that children were being ill-treated. One of the undercover childcare workers was able to start working in the crèche without being Garda vetted.

The report came just three years after another RTÉ investigation into a crèche that prompted a tightening of the laws that govern childcare facilities in Ireland.

COMMUNITY OR PRIVATE PROVIDERS?

There are two types of crèche operating in Ireland today: community and private. There are a number of public schemes designed to help parents afford childcare, however these are set to be replaced in October with the National Childcare Scheme, a new offering that will offer financial supports to parents who have children in a Tusla-registered childcare facilities.

Following on from the controversy surrounding the RTÉ investigation, ‘Changing Ireland’ set out to speak to managers of crèches in Ireland about the role of community childcare – and if having more of these crèches would help to eradicate some of the child-safety issues.

We contacted crèches in each province. A significant majority were unable to comment due to time constraints.

However, one crèche manager in a rural area spoke in-depth about the importance of community-run childcare. Since she would have needed permission from her board of management to speak to the media, and had not gone through this process, she would only speak anonymously.

Catherine* has never worked in a private crèche and has only spent time in community facilities. In her role as manager of a community crèche, she reports to a management committee and a board of directors.

WE HAVE VOLUNTARY MANAGEMENT BOARDS

“We do reports weekly and monthly,” she said. “I have colleagues that work in the private sector and they answer to the owner, who sometimes is the manager. They wouldn’t usually have a board

of management in the private sector, whereas the community sector always has a board of management.

“In a community crèche, you have to go to meetings, you have to have things proposed and seconded. There are fine people working in the private sector – but we have a checklist and we have to follow it.”

In her crèche, parents who use the service sit on the committee, “so they’re in the know and they’re dropping in and out,” Catherine says.

“In private, you’re the owner – it’s your bread and butter, so you call the shots. With us, it’s quite different.”

COMMUNITY CRÈCHE STAFF ARE ALL GARDA VETTED

Catherine was shocked that one of the undercover reporters was allowed to work with children without being Garda vetted.

“If we’re taking on an employee, there have to be interviews and committee members have to be on the panel.”

In a community-run crèche, the golden rule, Catherine says, is that “everybody has to be Garda vetted” before they step inside a room with children.

“You have to be registered and you have to be Garda vetted because you’re going before a panel of people, and there’s eight or maybe 10 different personalities and opinions.”

BETTER REGULATION

Despite the benefits of community-run childcare, over two-thirds of crèches operating in Ireland are privately owned. Pobal – which works on behalf of the government to support communities – says that 32% of children in childcare were enrolled in a community-run facility, and 68% were in a private crèche in 2017/2018.

“Over recent years, there has been a slight increase in the number of private services while the number of community services has remained relatively constant,” Pobal said in a statement.

Pobal also said that community-run childcare



• *Quality care in the first five years is critical to every child’s development.*

facilities are often a “core part” of local services and that they have a unique understanding of the needs of communities.

“They often benefit from the skills of locally-based (voluntary) boards of management and have a deep dedication to the welfare of the children of their communities. The ethos of their delivery provides a very strong foundation to plan and deliver the services children need,” said Pobal.

OTHER COUNTRIES INVEST MORE ON CHILDCARE

Meanwhile, Early Childhood Ireland (ECI) – a membership-based organisation for people who work in childcare – said the government needs to increase public funding into childcare if things are to improve.

“Ireland currently only invests around 0.2% GDP in early years care and education,” the group said in a statement.

“This is significantly lower than the OECD average of 0.8% GDP and five times less than the UNICEF-recommended international benchmark of 1% GDP.”

“Leading countries in this area (such as the Nordic countries) invest between 1.3% and 1.9%. Increased investment by government in early years is essential if we are to address key issues of affordability for parents, sustainability for providers, and supports for staff,” said ECI.

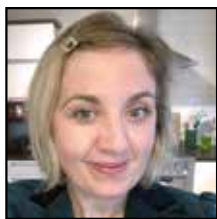
Clearly more investment is going to be needed in childcare going forward – particularly if parents are going to feel comfortable in the knowledge that their children are safe.

*Catherine’s name was changed.

OPINION

Community staff dealing with extraordinary challenges with less-than-ordinary budgets

WRITES MARIA O'DWYER



Both private and community childcare (now referred to as Early Learning and Care) services play vital roles in supporting child outcomes and our social economy. The recent 'Behind Closed Doors'

documentary seems to have reignited the debate about which is better, which is safer and which is more closely monitored. It is a futile argument because ultimately, it's comparing apples and oranges.

Every child under five should have access to a high quality early learning and care service.

Every service, whether private or community-based, is mandated to keep babies and young children safe. They support the development of each child by meeting that child's specific needs – and therein lies the difference between the two.

Community services are generally located in small or rural areas and areas of socio-economic disadvantage, where the needs of communities are diverse and distinct.

In areas that are characterised by higher welfare dependency, lower educational attainment and more frequent anti-social behaviour, the early learning and care service provides an additional protective layer for each child.

In addition to childcare, staff in those settings play a significant (and unrecognised) family support role, and often engage with clinicians, community development services and social workers in their day-to-day work.

They deal with situations that most of us can't imagine: supporting young children with interrupted attachment because a parent has been sent to prison; navigating practice amid family feuds; ensuring high nutritional standards as some children present hungry each morning and so forth. In areas where the needs are that high, quality provision needs to be higher.

Across the entire Early Years sector, staff are underpaid and undervalued. The current funding model for childcare means that services are on their knees.

For community services in particular, additional funding needs to be allocated to increase staff ratios beyond the minimum. In their everyday work, the staff in those services work with both the causes and effects of childhood poverty and trauma.

Yes, community services should absolutely be subject to the same statutory regulations as their private counterparts, but they should also be resourced differently. Recognition needs to be given to the fact that they are expected to deal with

the extraordinary within the constraints of less than ordinary budgets.

The governance of those services also needs to be supported, to reflect the ongoing professionalisation of the sector. Voluntary Management Committees should be restructured so that they are comprised both of members who have a thorough understanding and experience of child development and the early years sector, as well as those who can bring relevant expertise from areas such as health, accountancy, insurance, etc.

I have sat through many board meetings where early learning and care services are held accountable to local parish priests and retired primary school teachers. Teachers report to those who have the same qualification and experience as them – we need to stop making Early Years practitioners answerable to (albeit well-intentioned) people who have never set foot in an actual childcare service.

On the surface, Budget 2020 headlines looked promising for the sector. An additional €94m allocation to the Department of Children and Youth

Affairs, €54m of which is ear-marked for early learning and care.

While this represents a 9.3% increase in spend from last year, this funding is for schemes,

namely the Early Childhood Care and Education (Free Preschool) and the new National Childcare Scheme (NCS).

There is no allowance for better wages or conditions for staff, who are fighting hard for the bare minimum, a living wage. The NCS, for example, values early years staff at €10.56 per hour and Managers as €28k per annum. It means that we will continue to see a significant exodus from the sector, as qualified staff – who want to support better outcomes for children – can enjoy a better standard of living by working in supermarkets and bars.

'First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families' was launched last November and it encompasses all of the services referred to above. It is critically important the strategy works, because we know that the first five years of childhood last a lifetime.

There are concerns the well-intended strategy will not succeed if people continue to leave underpaid jobs in the childcare sector. Now is the time to invest fully in the early learning and care staff and in the services that wrap that extra protective layer around vulnerable children.

** Maria O'Dwyer, PhD, is an independent research consultant, working mainly within the community and voluntary sector. As a sociologist Maria is particularly passionate about early childhood and both the causes and effects of poverty. Her website is coming soon. In the meantime, find her on Twitter: @MiaBeetle*

RESPONSE

Department says it shares concerns and is taking action

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) shares concerns raised in articles here regarding the provision of childcare. It issued the following statement:

"As the State is not the employer, the DCYA does not pay the wages of staff working in early learning and care (ELC) settings, nor can it set wage levels or determine working conditions for these staff.

"Nonetheless, The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs is doing all in her power to improve wages and working conditions in the sector. This includes calling for the sector to pursue a Sectoral Employment Order (SEO), which offers a viable mechanism to establish appropriate wage levels.

"The Minister... is doing all in her power to improve wages and working conditions."

"Minister Zappone established a sustainability fund for the early learning and care and school age childcare sector in 2017 - to assist high quality services which were experiencing financial difficulties to transition themselves to a sustainable footing. This is part of a range of supports to services. In Budget 2020 the Minister has increased the funding available in this fund to €2.2 m (from €1.7m) and has asked that the use of the fund now be extended to assist with needs arising in the event that the Labour Court introduces a Sectoral Employment Order.

"The most recent (2019) data indicates that the average hourly pay in ELC and school-age childcare is now €12.55, a 3% increase on last year. Low pay and poor working conditions in the sector remain a serious concern and impact on the quality of provision to children through their effect on the recruitment and retention of qualified staff.

"Staff turnover in the ELC sector was in 2018 estimated to be 24.7% of the total employees working in the sector. However, it is estimated that approximately half of those exited the sector, while the other half joined another service within the sector.

"Arising from the publication of 'First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families', a Workforce Development Plan is being developed which will identify policies to move to graduate led workforce by 2028, and raise the profile of careers in the sector. Work is ongoing in this regard and will continue into 2020.

"In 'First 5' a commitment is also made to develop a new funding model that will leverage additional investment for certain criteria, for example, better pay and working conditions, or full implementation of the curriculum," it states.



**An Roinn Leanaí
agus Gnóthaí Óige
Department of Children
and Youth Affairs**

Volunteers rock in Kilkenny

BY BEN PANTER

Anyone looking for a bit of 'Rock' could do worse than start in a quarry.

Although, if you were looking for flagstones, you may want to avoid Ballykeefe quarry, seven miles outside Kilkenny City - the type of rock it specialises in would be closer to punk than pavement.

In early 2019, Ireland's only amphitheatre announced a stellar line-up of musical acts including *The Stunning*, *Finbar Furey* and *Aslan*, while in 2018 a sell-out crowd witnessed international pop sensation *Hudson Taylor*.

It was the culmination of 30 years of efforts by local volunteers. With LEADER support, including last year's €100,000 investment, the unique venue - which hosted its first act in 2000 - can now seat 1,000 people.

As well as doubling the seating capacity from 500 to 1,000, LEADER's investment in the project also allowed Kilmanagh-Ballycallan-Killaloe (KBK) community group to improve the light, make the venue wheelchair-friendly and provide additional toilets.

Initial plans for the quarry were modest as volunteer veteran Padraic Flaherty explained:

"The County Council were using it as a dump for abandoned and crashed cars. We thought we'd put in a couple of benches and maybe people would have a picnic."

Padraic has been with the project since the beginning. A self-professed "blow-in", his lack of prowess with the sliotar had hindered efforts to integrate.

"I didn't play hurling which is the main game in Kilkenny. I played a little bit of football, maybe got two games a year, so I hadn't really been involved with anything.

He volunteered with KBK which had established itself in 1989 as a social enterprise group.

"It helped me get to know people.



• Three of the dozens of volunteers who made sure that Ballykeefe Amphitheatre lived up to its name as one of the best live music venues in the country in 2019. PHOTO COURTESY OF: <https://www.instagram.com/ballykeeffeamph/>

From there it just took off."

Pop superstars had been a long way from KBK's minds when they first set their gaze on what was nothing more than a wasteland.

Back then, the Kilkenny Action Group, who would become one of the foundation groups of the Kilkenny LEADER Partnership, helped KBK with funding for technical studies.

KBK had identified the site as having potential as a picnic area. "We hadn't heard of acoustics at the time," said Padraic.

Fortunately, architect David Fitzgerald had. He was drafted in for inspiration and, from his suggestion to use the quarry as a performance area, Ballykeefe Amphitheatre was conceived.

"It started off as a green bank," said KBK chairperson Matt O'Sullivan.

"Over the years we added stone seating and an old corrugated steel roof for the bandstand was replaced in 2012 with a state-of-the-art canopy.

"We added a wheelchair access area and enclosed the whole site two years ago which adds to the atmosphere and defines our capacity."

"Our first bit of funding was from LEADER for a feasibility study."

"Over the years we've had a lot of help from LEADER. The Department of Arts Heritage and Culture helped with the canopy.

Kilkenny County Council, local sponsors and Kilkenny Credit Union have also been very good to us."

"There is a core of about a dozen volunteers but on a given night there could be 40 people helping.

"We have an annual get together - a barbecue for people involved and their friends and family. It's a free day and an annual thing.

"Funds that we make are redistributed throughout the parish, so the money we make goes back to the other organisations that volunteers are involved in."

It is clear that the project has been a success.

Asked how other community groups can emulate these achievements, Padraic said:

"Stick at it! Try not to overstretch yourself and your volunteers at the start. We took it at our own pace - we started with one or two events and now have 10 a year."



• Above: Christy Dignam, lead singer with Aslan who played this summer to a capacity crowd. LEADER funding goes to more types of projects than people realise. This is the only amphitheatre being supported. Indeed, it is the only amphitheatre in the country.

PHOTO BY: Michael Duggan

PROJECT: Focus on LEADER

How to apply for LEADER funding

STEP 1: EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Before formally applying, applicants must submit an 'Expression of Interest' (EOI). This helps to establish a project's eligibility, such as if it fits in with the objectives of the area's Local Development Strategy. It also introduces applicants to the preparation work required in applying for LEADER funding.

EOIs are assessed by the project officers in Local Development Companies. After this, eligible applicants are invited to proceed to submit a full application.

Find out which company supports applicants in your area here:

<http://bit.ly/LEADERcontacts>

The information is mapped by county here: <http://bit.ly/LEADERmapIRL>



STEP 2: MAKING A FULL APPLICATION

The application form asks for information - such as the activities and expected impacts of the project and for a budget. Supporting documentation is also required. The details required depend on the type of applicant (community/private individual) and project.

Applicants must also include details of the proposed project such as a timeline, its main activities, expected job creation (if appropriate) and wider anticipated local impacts.

Applicants are also asked to outline how they intend to promote the project.

Applying for LEADER funding is a process that takes patience and some work, but remember support is available from Local Development Companies.

Also, unlike applying for a bank loan, once your project is successful you don't have to pay it back. There are rules of course. For instance, the project must remain in operation for five years after the date of the final payment.



NATIONAL

€90m invested in 2,400 projects

By September, over 2,400 projects had been fully approved under LEADER, with a combined value of over €90m.

Grants range in size from €1,250 up to €200,000, generally, depending on the type of application. A community applicant will have to fundraise up to 25% of the total project cost.

The start-to-finish time - from an applicant's first tentative enquiry to when they can draw down funds - is measured in months rather than in weeks.

So, what can LEADER do for your rural area?

This is how the Department of Rural and Community Development describe the process:

The LEADER approach to rural development is based on a community-led local development approach that allows individuals, communities and businesses to develop projects that address the needs they themselves identify in their own communities.

Funded through Ireland's Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020, the current LEADER Programme provides €250 million in financial grant aid to support the social and economic development of rural communities across Ireland.

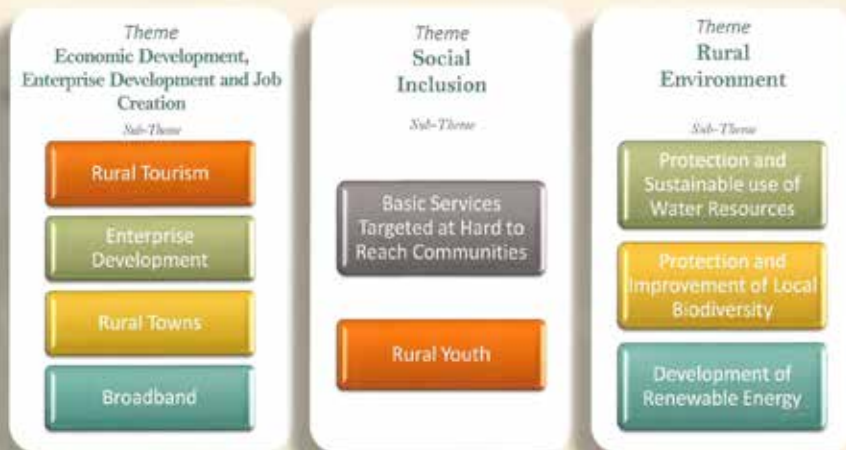
The LEADER Programme 2014-2020 includes themes that reflect the overarching needs of rural Ireland. Each theme contains a number of sub-themes.

For a full breakdown of projects approved by Local Action Groups (2014-2020) see:

<http://bit.ly/LEADERprojectsIRL>

LEADER Programme Themes and Sub-Themes

Rural Development (LEADER) Programme funding for the period 2014-2020 focuses on the following themes and sub-themes:



COLLABORATION: This is the first in a series on LEADER. Thanks to staff in the LEADER Policy and Operations Unit at the Dept. of Rural and Community Development and to Dr. Maura Farrell, NUIG, for their co-operation. We welcome readers' comments and suggestions.

EQUALITY

DONEGAL'S WISE WOMEN WOW EU

BY BEN PANTER

A Donegal project aimed at women who are "neither employed nor unemployed" was a finalist in the European 'Regio-Stars' awards held in early October. This means it is now recognised as being one of the most innovative anti-poverty projects in Europe.

The Women's Integrated Skills and Employment (WISE) project has 450 women on the books and they are guided by advisors Michelle Gallagher, Grainne Boyle and Penney Brennan.

Employment advisor Grainne Boyle explains: "We help women find a way out of poverty. There are many who can't claim - maybe they are a carer or on disability, or maybe they were out of work for twenty years as they raised a family.

"One thing we are strong on is never forcing anyone to do a job that is unsuitable or that they won't stay at."



• Finalists: Grainne Boyle, Eamonn Moore, Penney Brennan and Michelle Gallagher.

"Interviews can be scary - they may lack confidence after all that time.

"We work with them on a personal development plan and find out if upskilling is needed.

"They might have loads of experience with children but you have to have qualifications for everything now.

"We work closely with Donegal Education and Training Board (ETB) to find suitable courses and help with funding where we can, we run day courses, approach employers on behalf of the women who might be nervous of making the approach and ask would they give her a run?

"We prepare them for interview and may even go along with them for moral support," she said.

The project - funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Department of Justice and Equality - is no stranger to recognition having won an AONTAS Award in March for promoting sustainable employment. In the Regio-Stars, it made the final cut of 24 from 199 entries.

WISE operates from three locations: Buncrana, Dungloe and Letterkenny. The service is free.

"One thing we are strong on is never forcing anyone to do a job that is unsuitable or that they won't stay at," said Grainne.

W: www.facebook.com/WISE500/

EMPOWERMENT: Women

Over 150 women train level for equality & so

- Organisers hope to repeat the training

A one-year pilot project to get women on the margins of society involved in politics and in the fight for social change and equality is to be repeated.

Over 150 women took part in 'Women for Change' training run by the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi).

The project resulted in groups in Limerick, Cork and Kerry, Mayo, Navan, Meath and Clare learning how to lobby and campaign at local level.

Over the year - for example - they examined the challenges facing Traveller women seeking equality, for women living in direct provision and for women in rural communities experiencing domestic abuse.

Organisers said the training was oversubscribed. While funding has not yet been secured for next year, the NWCi is lobbying for secure, long-term funding.

Catherine Lane* of the NWCi said, "The project brought together a diversity of women who are (interested) in representation and participation in their local communities to access training, peer support and advocate for women's equality and social change.

"The project is about developing and supporting leadership among women to be advocates for women's equality issues. It resources women from different backgrounds to come together to share their knowledge and experience," she said.

Hopeful that the project will receive funding, organisers want to stay in touch with the local groups so they could be involved in future projects.

According to Annette Fox, a Co. Carlow development worker**, "If you are part of a women's group or project, you can access support from your local development company - now is the time as many companies are making their plans for 2020."

The pilot project was overseen by a network of the NWCi's member organisations supported by local development companies, including Women4Women/ Southside Partnership, Duhallow Women's Forum/ IRD Duhallow and Carlow County Development Partnership.

'Women for Change' was supported with funding from Training Links which is administered by the Wheel on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills.

CORK & KERRY / LOCAL KNOWLEDGE KEY

Local knowledge and relationships were key to getting the local women for change groups off the ground. For instance in the North Cork/East Kerry area, two women - Mary Creedon, development officer with IRD Duhallow and Judy O'Leary, chairperson of the Duhallow Women's Forum - worked together to connect and support women to take part.

CARLOW / UNITING FARMING WOMEN

In Carlow, Annette Fox worked with the NWCi to organise sessions on preparing for panels and understanding local government. The project had a special focus on women in farming and enabled

"The project is about supporting leadership and advocates for women's"



• Ola Mustapha speaking at a national gathering of women.



• Annette Fox addresses the audience.

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among women to be
equality issues.”



men who had completed the programme.



women across the county, she said, “to share the experiences that unite women”.

DUBLIN / FOCUS ON SDGS

Women from the Women4Women programme participated in the Dublin Women for Change sessions on the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals and on women’s equality.

MAYO / INVOLVING WOMEN IN DIRECT PROVISION

The Diversity Mayo Project, a group backed by South West Mayo Development Company, supported women, including many with migrant backgrounds, to take part in sessions.

For example, Ola Mustapha, founder of the Ballyhaunis Inclusion Project, a support group for asylum seekers in the town’s direct provision centre, was given a platform to share her experience of supporting women living in direct provision to find and use their voices at local level.

GUIDEBOOK PUBLISHED

To mark the culmination of the year of training, a detailed and nicely designed guidebook on advocacy and campaigning for women’s equality activists was published. It was launched on September 12th at a celebration event which brought people together from all the counties where training was delivered.

The guidebook - we highly recommend it - can be downloaded for free at <http://bit.ly/campaigningwomen>

* Catherine Lane is the NWCI’s officer for women in local, community and rural development.

** Annette Fox is Carlow County Development Partnership’s social inclusion and community development specialist.

GUIDEBOOK SAMPLE ASK A PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION

The Government can be asked four types of questions by Oireachtas members – leaders’ questions; priority questions; oral questions; and written questions (generally called Parliamentary Questions).

A limitless number of parliamentary questions (PQs) can be submitted by TDs. (Note - Senators cannot submit PQs).

The answers to PQs are not read out in the Dáil but are included on the Oireachtas daily record. PQ answers are drafted by civil servants and must be signed off by the relevant Minister.

PQs are a useful tool for advocates to find out about the implementation of policies, the cost of Government activities, the funding provided to different state services and other areas of government business. As such, they can provide information for campaigns and data for submissions.

For more information about the different types of questions, visit: www.oireachtasbrief.ie/about-the-oireachtas/parliamentary-questions/

NATIONAL LOBBYING FOR MULTI-ANNUAL FUNDING

- ‘Women For Change’ seek secure funding



The group that provided training in lobbying and campaigning is itself lobbying for secure funds to continue the training long-term.

Catherine Lane of the National Women’s Council of Ireland (NWCI) said, “It is vital we continue to invest in the participation of women at local level so they can meaningfully engage with decision-makers and influence the decisions that affect their lives.”

This project shows the appetite for spaces for women to come together to support each other, to strategize and share their knowledge and experience of working for change.

“It is essential that the necessary resources, including multi-annual funding, are made available for women’s groups to support real and meaningful participation for all women.

“It is particularly important that local groups can reach women who are marginalised or disadvantaged, and support them to develop their influencing capacity, which will ultimately improve decision-making in all levels of government and civil society,” she said.

The NWCI is partly funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development through its Scheme to Support National Organisations.



TIPS & KNOW-HOW

FUNDING - GET BY WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM YOUR FRIENDS



*- An insider's perspective
by Richard Deane**

Through my many years of working in Pobal**, I have seen many good funding applications and unfortunately many bad ones - unfortunately the bad ones outweigh the good. Applying for funding is a big undertaking for any voluntary group. So, if you want to increase your chances of being in the good category, consider doing the following.



1. ALLOW PLENTY OF TIME

Everything takes longer than you think it will. No matter how simple it may seem to pull together a project there are a lot of different steps, some more time-consuming than others, involved in submitting a funding application.

A lot of funding applications are now online, but you can usually download a copy of the application beforehand and you can work on perfecting your answers.

Don't leave it until the 11th hour to consider your answers as you will run out of steam and you won't do yourself justice.

Technology can let you down when you most need it! The broadband can be slow or traffic to a site can be busy if everyone goes online in the last few minutes. Submit on time and well before the deadline.

Some funders require you to set up an account - do this during business hours so you can get support if you need it.

2. CHOOSE YOUR FUNDER AND SCHEME CAREFULLY

It's good to talk! Speak to the funders - we're here to help. We have money to give away and we want to be able to do that.

Don't be afraid to ask us questions to get an insight into what we're interested in. Keep an eye on the funder's website, their Twitter accounts, and read through guidance and eligibility criteria carefully.

We don't want you wasting your time - or ours

- applying for something we simply cannot fund.

3. GET HELP FROM FRIENDS!

Don't stress yourself out by thinking you can do it all! Set up a working group from your committee and divvy up the application form.

That way, you create a team effort, you get different perspectives and in the sad event that it doesn't get funded, it's a burden and disappointment that can be shared!

4. PLAN, PLAN AND PLAN SOME MORE

Plan your application and take your time, don't rush it. Go out and look for inspiration to help pull together an idea that's worthy of being funded.

The wider the range of ideas you can expose yourself to, the more interesting concepts you'll come up with.

Nothing says it like a picture: If it's a capital project, like fixing a hole in your roof, send in a photograph. Make that emotive connection between the grant assessor and yourself. Make them feel the cold and the damp! Remember, we are human beings too!

- 'Preparing to Apply for Funding'
(<http://bit.ly/Fundsprep>)
- 'Writing a Funding Application'
(<http://bit.ly/write-apply>)

5. GET IT REVIEWED

Get a second opinion from a friend or person not connected to your group. Proofread, spellcheck and stick to specified formats - remember, the little things count! Presentation, punctuation and grammar set the tone for how people feel about your work - they really do matter. Don't use big words, or write long essays full of jargon. Speak in your own voice and signpost us to research which backs up what you are looking for.

Sometimes, people send in long and detailed research with only a couple of paragraphs that are relevant. So, if sending in the Golden Pages, point us to the page you want us to read.

6. MORE TIPS

These are just a couple of things that spring to mind. There's more detailed advice in our two guides which will give you a helping hand!

Very best of luck with your proposals!

** Richard Deane is Pobal's Head of Funder Liaison and Programme Design.*

*** Pobal allocated €695 million to local and national community organisations in 2018. It works on behalf of the Government to provide management and support services to national programmes covering social inclusion, equality, inclusive employment and enterprise, and supporting children and young people.*



• A section of the attendance at the 'Helping Hand's event held in Ballina, Co. Mayo, earlier this year.

PHOTO BY: A.M.

Peace projects are safe - Tanaiste & Minister Simon Coveney



At the Ploughing Championships, 'Changing Ireland' put one question to Tanaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney, on communities projects and Brexit. We asked the Minister what he had to say to community project leaders across Ireland and particularly those on the border with Brexit issues looming.

"The first thing I would like to say to them is that we're going to continue to support you," said Minister Coveney.

"In terms of funding many of these community projects - many of them particularly that are linked to peace and protecting relationships, particularly between young people and in the border counties - you do great work and it's really important that we continue to fund you in that

work.

"And we have an agreement with the EU that we will continue to fund peace funding, even beyond the current funding cycle, which is really important post-Brexit.

"But of course we would like the British government to also commit to play their part in that regard as well.

"Lots of people are concerned and there's huge uncertainty. But the one thing that I would like to say to projects that are about peace and community engagement and integration - I can assure you we will continue to fund and support the work you do," he said.

- Photos & interviews by Allen Meagher.

Socially aware young people on air - Belfast-based online station reaches 8,000 youths in 4 months

Sean McD - that's his full name - is a community radio station manager based in Belfast. His project is one of hundreds supported since the Good Friday Agreement was signed.

"I'm here to represent Radio YNP (an online radio station) which is part of the Youth Network for Peace Project," said Sean, speaking at the Ploughing Championships.

"It's a funded project meant to connect young people across Northern Ireland and the six border counties in the Republic to make them more socially aware and more engaged in politics.

"The goal across the whole programme is 10,000 young people. The radio station itself has reached 8,000 listeners in total - it launched last May - and that's on the radio station alone. We also have podcasts.

"All programmes are written, recorded, edited and produced by young people, with guidance from project workers.

"The main aim of the station is to both promote the work going on in the rest of the YNP programme and also to give young people a platform.

"It's about community development, about promoting peace-building and it's also about young people having their voice heard and giving their opinion on things.

"It doesn't have to be on serious issues. It doesn't have to be politics all the time. Young

people come on and talk about horror films, or computer games, or what they're doing for the weekend.

"It's just an opportunity for young people to hear other young people on the radio," he said.

Of interest, Sean also sings and plays with the band 'Search Party Belfast' whose debut album (just out) is titled 'Too Much Red Tape'.

LINKS:

W: www.radioynp.com
W: www.youthaction.org
W: www.seupb.eu

CONTACT:

T: @_SeanMCD_
F: <https://www.facebook.com/sean.mcdonnell.33>



• Sean told his project's story to hundreds of visitors at the Ploughing Championships.

VOLUNTEER APPS & FUNDING OPPS IN SUNNY CARLOW

BY: ALLEN MEAGHER

If you walk past the ploughing, the new tractors and the array of goods for sale, you could still spend three days going from stall-to-stall exploring civil society in Ireland.

Approximately 300,000 people attended this year, paying €20 each to enter. A small stall sets exhibitors back about a grand for the three days.

The championships began in 1931 when farmers from Kildare took on farmers from Wexford to see who was best at ploughing. Since then, it has grown phenomenally to include government marquees, civil society, small and large businesses and of course ploughing competitors from around the world.

This year, in scorching weather, it was hard to see the stalls selling woolly hats doing well, though most others were kept going non-stop, including the Department of Rural and Community Development.

There were many dozens of national (and some local) civil society organisations present - in recognition of the fact that if you want to reach people from rural Ireland, then the Ploughing Championships presents a unique opportunity.

MISSED AN TAOISEACH

This year's event was held in Fenagh, Co. Carlow. A woman asked at a seminar on rural Ireland if Minister Michael Ring could get the Championships moved to her native Donegal for next year.

She missed out on asking An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, who made a flying visit. We met him last year, but he escaped us by 30 seconds this year. However, Tanaiste Simon Coveney was good enough to talk to us about Brexit plans. It's that kind of place. You never know who you'll meet.

We met Emily Logan, chief commissioner of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and her team (they feature on the cover). Shay Riordan from West Limerick Resources tapped me on my shoulder while I was listening to a panel discussion. The new Pobal CEO, Anna Shakespeare, visited.

Organisations offered volunteering opportunities - for example Boardmatch, Local Links and Volunteer Ireland (who launched a new app - see opposite). Others advised on funding opportunities: The Department of Rural and Community Development made sure people could get all the information they needed on the many schemes and programmes it provides.

COULDN'T FIND MY CAR

Finally, while I never saw anyone ploughing, I did meet a second cousin who farms on the way in one day (he had a VIP pass and gave me a lift). That evening, I spent an hour finding my car. Thankfully, I had photographed it after I parked up that morning. Unhelpfully, all the cars nearby were gone when I went to find it. What field did I park in again? The one day I didn't record its position on Google Maps. That's how big the Ploughing is. Despite Donegal pleas, it is to be held again in Carlow in 2020. Roll on next September!

PHOTOS BY 'CHANGING IRELAND'.



• Panel discussion: Minister Michael Ring, Minister of State John Paul Phelan, Margaret Malone (National Transport Authority) and David Minton (North and Western Regional Assembly).



• Minister Michael Ring listens to a speaker from the audience who asked tongue-in-cheek why the Ploughing Championships couldn't be held in her native Donegal next year.



• Rosie Smyth of the Department of Rural and Community Development and Katherine Byrne of Pobal provide information on the Community Services Programme.



• A garda provides tips and advice for home safety.



BOARDMATCH IS BREAKING RECORDS

- Trust strangers, not just your pals

Boardmatch matches individuals to the skillsets that charities and not-for-profits post on their website. It's free and for all of Ireland and expanding fast. This year, they aim to set a new record.

Eva Gurn, CEO, said:

"We provide not-for-profits and charities with the opportunities to find their board members through a transparent and independent process.

"I've been with Boardmatch for the the past 10 years and, in that time, we've really seen the significance of Boardmatch to the sector.

"We're encouraging charities and not-for-profits to look outside their normal circles of their friends and colleagues, to look for certain skillsets for your board rather than just people that you know.

"We've seen our boardmatched numbers grow. In 2017, we saw 140 individuals placed onto the boards of charities and not-for-profits. In 2018, we helped appoint over 320 individuals and in 2019 we're aiming to set a record and (help) appoint over 450 individuals onto boards.

"Nobody owns these groups - they're public entities and that's why we need very strong boards

in place. Boardmatch really encourages more diversity.

"While you still need a lot of people around the table with passion about what the organisation does, we really believe you have to have a good mix of business skills as well. It's only with those skills that we're really going to have more impact in communities and in society," she said.

- in conversation with
Allen Meagher.

Testimony:

We in 'Changing Ireland' are certainly aware of successful placements on voluntary boards by Boardmatch.

Website: boardmatch.ie



• Eva Gurn, Boardmatch CEO.

Funding:

Boardmatch Ireland is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development (25% of total income) with the remainder coming from the provision of services, training and consultancy.



Check out the i-Vol app

- Find volunteering opportunities from the comfort of home

A new i-Vol app is set to completely change how people volunteer.

"One of the most common reasons that people don't volunteer is that they don't know how. This app will make it easy for them," said

Franziska O'Donnell, acting manager of Dublin City Volunteer Centre.

She said nationally there were 8,600 organisations seeking 23,000 volunteers recently and every opening is there to see on the iVol app.

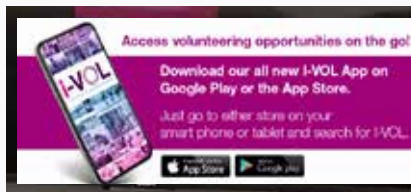
"In Dublin city alone, there over 400 volunteering opportunities to choose from. People can simply open the map and see roles nearby in a few clicks."

The app from Volunteer Ireland was launched by Seán Canney, Minister of State for Community Development at the Ploughing Championships.

It lets people type in the location, cause and activity they are interested in and how much time they can give.

You can also use the search function to find a specific organisation name or role.

The app is available to download from the App Store and Google Play Store.



• Minister of State Seán Canney (left) launched the new app describing it as "an important new initiative that will make it easier than ever for people to find a volunteer role." The app's development was funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development.



• Ah do, volunteer!



• Karen Joynt, Emily Logan (Chief Commissioner), Ruth Gallagher and Niall Matthews of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

PHOTOS BY: A. MEAGHER.



• You can laugh out loud and really have fun in libraries nowadays. Above - The creativity workshops given at the Ploughing Championships by Libraries Ireland were a howl.



• Eoin Bradshaw and Mary Ann Hickey from Carlow volunteered at the Water Safety Ireland stand during the Ploughing Championships. During the summer, they were on lifeguard duty at Bagnelstown Swimming Pool.



• Peter Masterson of Longford Community Resources with Ger Flood of the Department of Rural and Community Development.



• Karl Duffy, social inclusion manager and Dylan Thomas, SICAP education worker with Carlow County Development Partnership.



• John Corr and PJ King at the LEADER table in the marquee.



• Annette Doherty (DRCD).



Above: Martin Crowe and Noreen Ryan of Ballyhoura Rural Services which has developed a social farm in Co. Limerick.

Pictured (right): Martin Crowe taking questions about Ballyhoura's unique model for social farming.



Centre nets €80k cash to empower families



Ciara Kane (pictured left) was at the Ploughing to represent the Northside Family Resource Centre (FRC) in Limerick city. The Ballynanty centre manager was overjoyed when we met her, having just picked up an award of €80,000 from the Social Innovation Fund (SIF).

"This money will enable us to recruit and embed a therapy therapist into our children's therapy services. They will support parents to take control of their own parenting," she said.

The FRC - one of 120 countrywide - works with children and their parents to reduce the impact of trauma that is often compounded by factors such as poverty. The funding from SIF is to empower families.

The centre already provides childcare and afterschool services, runs parenting programmes and meals-on-wheels, provides psychotherapy, supports youth work, supports older people in their homes and runs adult education classes. And that's only the half of it.

The context in which they work is neatly explained in an excellent video which shows how family trauma can lead to children losing their way early in life: <http://bit.ly/escalate-FRC>

To find out more about Ballynanty's approach contact Ciara.

T: 061-326623

E: ciarakane@northsidefrc.ie

FB: <https://www.facebook.com/northsidefrc/>

RELATED COVERAGE

• To read more about the Social Innovation Fund awards, see page 22.

• To read more about childcare in Ireland, turn to pages 10-11.



• A still from Northside FRC's short film 'Escalate'.

€550k IN SOCIAL AWARDS

- Minister of State Canney announces winners

The Social Innovation Fund, in partnership with the Department of Rural and Community Development and philanthropic donors, has presented €550,000 to six community-based projects.

Seán Canney, junior minister for community development*, officially announced the 'Sparkling Impact' winners at the Ploughing Championships.

He said, "It makes me very proud that my Department, through the Dormant Accounts Funds, supports Social Innovation Fund Ireland."

Every euro given by philanthropists to the fund is matched by another euro from the Department.

Deirdre Mortell, the innovation fund's CEO said, "Today's awardees (are) all creating meaningful social impact in communities" and their work was "incredibly important".

The funding was awarded to:

- The Shona Project, an online community in Co. Waterford that aims to educate, empower and inspire today's Irish girls to become tomorrow's strong, confident and curious young women.
- The Step Ahead Project, run by Acquired



Brain Injury Ireland. It's a free vocational assessment service that helps people return to paid employment or provides training for brain injury survivors.

- Le Chéile in Dublin develops music ensembles for young people with disabilities using assistive music technology.

- St. Agnes' Community Centre for Music and the Arts is an intergenerational, grassroots project based in Crumlin, Dublin, that aims to bring all members of the community together to enjoy affordable music classes.

- Northside Family Resource Centre in Limerick. (See page 21).

- TLC Kidz in Dublin is a 12-week, evidence-informed programme for children and mothers in recovery

from domestic abuse, developed in Canada and delivered by Barnardos.

* Seán Canney, TD, is the Minister of State for Community Development, Natural Resources and Digital Development.

SOCIAL INVESTMENT



• Padraic Vallely, business development manager with the Social Innovation Fund

"We are venture capitalists for the social impact sector in Ireland and, to date, we've raised close to €26m in funds, backed 127 projects and impacted the lives of probably close to 40,000 people across the country in three years.

"We have a public-private partnership with the Department of Rural and Community Development. Every euro we raise is matched one-for-one by the department.

"We announced our Ignite funds at the Ploughing Championships. Five individual philanthropists had come in with €275,000 - so with the Department's backing we doubled that up to €550,000. Then, we backed six amazing projects which have innovation and impact at its core."

- Padraic Vallely of the Social Innovation Fund. For more on SIF, see page 18.



• All smiles at the Local Community Development Committees stand.



• Gearóid Ó Maelearcaidh and Cathal Ó Fainín, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Community & Technology

Libraries development “marks us out in Europe”

Stuart Hamilton is the new head of the libraries development unit in Libraries Ireland.

There was a time when you'd be afraid to go into your public library in case they remembered the big fine you hadn't paid. We've come lightyears since and now is an exciting time for libraries, as Stuart knows well:

“The Library is probably the best kept secret in your community.

“Libraries in Ireland are at the forefront of all that's good happening libraries in Europe. Recent investment coupled with the new services we have - plus the fact that you can access all the books in the country - marks us out as very different from other countries.

“Across the entire country, fines are gone and your library membership card is completely free.

“When you get your library card, you can access any of 15 million print books and we have thousands more e-books, e-magazines and e-newspapers.

“You can of course go into a library without a membership card. We've always been community-centred and anybody in the community - or from outside - can go into our library buildings. Libraries are community hubs. They've always been community hubs.

“The Library is probably the best kept secret in your community”

“We have 333 public library branches and 31 mobile libraries.

“We're taking advantage of the technology everybody has in their pockets to bring our services to you whether you're in the library building or at home. So you can access our digital services on your mobile phone.

“Also, there are now about 15 branches in the My Open Library service. We are working with the Department of Rural and Community Development to bring this to a new level by 2022. Let's say you're busy: We want to make sure that our services are open to you after working hours.

“I'd encourage people to go to www.librariesireland.ie and there you can join the library, see what services we have and, if you have an idea for us, I want to hear about it.” said Stuart.

- in conversation with A. Meagher.

ALSO SEE PAGE 25.



• Margaret Doran, Department of Rural and Community Development, Clodagh Shortall, Carlow Library Service, and Stuart Hamilton, Libraries Development. PHOTOS BY: A.M.



• Stuart Hamilton previously worked in library development in Dubai.



Readers, your favourite agony uncle has been busy compiling stats and facts for your learning.

But before we begin, did you know that Freudian slips affect one in sex people?

I don't have a girlfriend, but I'm thinking of investing in a home appliance in preparation for when she moves in, because it's probably true what they say - that a good dishwasher can extend the duration of a relationship by 30%.

Astonishingly, each year the number of staplers in an average office decreases by 15%. Nobody ever knows where they go.

I was also astonished to learn that 8% of people will believe any statistic they read. That figure rises to 80% among fans of US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Johnson in the UK (soon to be renamed).

This one comes from the US Department of Sport and Leisure: In any one year, the average US smartphone owner's fingers will scroll a total of 18km. This is further than I like to walk most years.

And one worth remembering: “Ideas and statements look 30% more compelling when written in quotation marks.”

Meanwhile, I've been answering lots of letters from people with literacy difficulties. Take these two:

John Murray wrote in on behalf of a friend. ‘Dear Horace,’ he writes, ‘why do professionals use such long words to describe what they do? My friend went to an orthotic clinic to get his teeth cleaned and arrived home with ankle splints. The orthodontist next door wasn't best pleased to lose the business either.’

Another letter was from Gerry G, a maths teacher in Roscommon. (I didn't know they taught maths in Roscommon - I learn new things every day). Anyway, Gerry G told me about his habit of mixing up the words ‘pacific’ and ‘specific’. ‘People don't even correct me now they are so used to me doing it,’ he says.

Anyhow, last week he was assigned to sub for the sick geography teacher in his school and all was well until he was explaining he was trying to be specific about the Atlantic.

It brought the house down. And kids as we know, love a good laugh. And why wouldn't they; it's cheaper than weed and poppers.

TOOLKIT: Useful anywhere

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORKS

CARLOW'S SUPERB GUIDE TO CONSULTATION

- "There will always be some parts of the community that don't engage"

Carlow Public Participation Network (PPN) has taken a step to narrow the gap between people and the decisions made by others that impact on their lives.

Naturally, the PPN believes it is better for people to hear before, rather than after, decisions are made. It wants communities to have a stronger say in decision-making and, to that end, has published a new guide for communities on the subject of meaningful consultation.

The toolkit could be used in any county or by any group in Ireland.

"It is critically important to encourage communities on the margins," says Carlow PPN co-ordinator, Gráinne O'Neill.

Carlow's 'Community Consultation Toolkit' is packed with tips, examples of best practice, case-studies and templates for starting right away - all presented in an easy-to-read style.

If people are consulted, it will "make Carlow a better place to live," says Gráinne. By publishing the guide, the PPN also hopes "to debunk the idea that the only way that things can be achieved is through political 'cute-hoorism'".

Also, the PPN believes a guide has not been done before - certainly not in Carlow and not recently.

'Changing Ireland' is aware of guides published in Cork, in 2010, on community consultation and participation, but that was before the emergence of social media as an

Community Consultation Toolkit



important influence in community life.

One of the booklets published in 2010 warned activists not to expect anyone to turn up to the first consultation meeting.

The authors of Carlow's new guide recognise "that there will always be some parts of the community that don't engage in consultation processes". Widespread views include people saying "What's the point? Nobody listens!"

SAVES MONEY

However, adopting and promoting the toolkit is expected to reap rewards, including saving money by doing things in a more effective way.

To give a small example, how often are speed bumps laid down in the wrong places - later having to be moved or removed - because

residents were not first consulted?

As one respondent quoted in the toolkit said, "The main thing is that... there is a real process of engagement... not being consulted on something already in draft form and being asked to tweak but not change it. This happens a lot due to timescales with departments and it is not a real consultation process."

By promoting the toolkit, Carlow PPN expects to see a measurable countywide improvement in the level of consultations and citizen engagement in the next two to three years. Training is also being provided for local authority staff to coincide with the toolkit's launch.

It is not only agencies, local authorities and community groups that need to consult communities. Gardaí, businesses, schools, Local Development Companies, Family Resource Centres, arts organisations,

charities and politicians must also consult people at local level to be successful.

Anyone can download the toolkit for free. The only disappointing thing is that the online PDF is read-only (you can't copy and paste text from it in its current format). However, no doubt the authors consulted about the format prior to publication and made their decision wisely.

- A. Meagher

Toolkit: <http://bit.ly/ConsultCarlow>

For more information, contact:
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W: www.carlowppn.ie
Social media: @CarlowPPN

WHAT'S IN THE TOOLKIT?

Carlow's user-friendly publication is intended as a resource for local authority staff, agencies and PPN members, among others.

It aims to give guidance for every type of consultation, from engaging with a local authority on local area plans to a consultation with members of a resident's association on what plants to plant and where.

It compares the types of results to expect from different methods of consultation and includes brief case studies on what has worked in other areas. For example, it points to the participatory budgeting now carried out annually by South Dublin County Council (as featured in our summer edition).

It includes checklists on:

- How to get media coverage via social media and mainstream media.
- Things to do before you begin a consultation.
- What to do after a consultation.

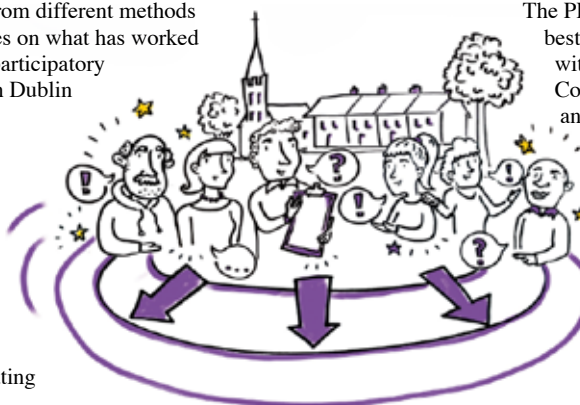
It includes tips on giving feedback to those you have consulted, as well as tips on evaluating and learning from the process.

The PDF includes templates for: questionnaires, communications plans, writing to a local authority, and organising a family / fun event as part of process.

Considerable research and planning went into the publication.

The PPN contracted The Wheel to compile examples of best practice in community consultation and to engage with PPN member organisations, Carlow County Council and other public bodies. It collated their views and experience on current versus desired approaches to community consultation at local government level.

The PPN wants communities to be consulted meaningfully and to influence decision-making. As the guide says, "Communities want to feel genuinely involved - that their opinions will really contribute to making a change and that they have input in shaping the agendas and decision affecting their lives."



PLANNING & PARTICIPATION

Smart Community Planning & Management for Extreme Weather Events

BY PAT KENNEDY

With climate change, communities are going to be severely tested by extreme weather.

We can expect: Extended periods of snow or frost; heavy winds and storms; prolonged rainfall leading to flooding; and, extreme heat and drought.

They all have the potential to kill, injure and disrupt day-to-day life. Communities are in the best position to help and support their residents and the communities that will respond best are those that can organise themselves most effectively and efficiently. Imagine the “ideal” rapid response mechanism, with co-ordination on a range of levels.

National: Met Éireann and relevant arms of government (health, public services, the army) would consider the approaching weather, decide on its severity and announce their response. E.g. “Flooding code orange in western counties”.

Regional: County councils and civil defence organisations may meet to identify high-risk areas and agree appropriate preparation and post-management plan.

Local: Community teams can co-ordinate local activities to reduce the impact on local

infrastructure, ensure all residents are taken care of and a plan can be put in place to deal with any negative events.

eTownz have developed a simple framework for preparing local development plans on any aspect of local development - including “extreme weather planning”. Communities can use the framework to hand prepare their plan or contact eTownz if they would like support.

The community planning framework invites the community to identify the following items in their communities, these can be periodically reviewed and updated but provide a simple model which can be prepared at a meeting or two:

- a) Identify Goals e.g.
 - Ensure the safety of all residents.
 - Reduce the risk to vulnerable people.
 - Keep important roads open where possible.
 - Communicate the key message efficiently and effectively.
- b) Identify Stakeholders e.g.
 - The local authority, civil defence groups.
 - Local businesses, farmers, farmers groups.
 - Local meals-on-wheels, volunteers, etc.
- c) Identify Assets: e.g.
 - Rivers and bogs.
 - Volunteered machinery such as tractors, chain-saws, etc.
 - Community alert scheme.
- d) Identify Projects: e.g.
 - Rapid response - who calls who, when.
 - Manage fallen trees, clear culverts, streams.
 - Training.

The eTownz framework (which can be applied to many aspects of local development) is free and open framework. At eTownz, we are developing an online tool which can support community councils and cross-community coordination. If you have other ideas or case studies of where communities have done exceptional work locally to deal with an extreme weather event, please add your comments to this article on changingIreland.ie

** Pat Kennedy is the founder and owner of econcepts and etownz. For more, see: etownz.ie*

Engaged citizens to get more support

This year's national conference for Public Participation Networks (PPNs) heard how more can and will be done to give community groups a stronger voice at local level.

Over 15,000 groups are now members of PPNs and up to ten people per county attended as representatives. The conference was held in Carlow, on October 10-11th, and focused on examples of best practice from around the country, while challenges were discussed in a session on the future of volunteering.

Attendees heard how rising insurance costs were a real concern to community groups. They also discussed how Local Community Development Committees need to evolve to better support the community sector and give it more of a voice.

Sean Driver from the National Adult Literacy Agency ran workshops on plain English, while Paul Geraghty from the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) gave advice on applying for funding.

The conference included field trips

to local community projects

COMMUNITY FOCUS

“The primary aim of the PPN is to facilitate and enable the public and the community to interact with local government and other relevant agencies,” said Sean Canney, Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development.

At the conference, he announced that funding has been secured for 2020-2021 to fund PPN support workers.

“That will allow our PPN to expand and do even more on behalf of (our) community,” said a delighted Sligo PPN representative.

CHALLENGES

There is a strong emphasis on engaging with the most marginalised members of communities that are not currently represented by any group in the PPN structures.

However, not all counties are equal. All involved were aware that Limerick, had no PPN in recent years, though it is now being re-established.

The socio-economic indicators for Limerick city - covering poverty and unemployment - are the starkest in the country.

IDEAL SETTING

Previous PPN conferences were held in Athlone and Sligo. They give people a chance to network, to showcase their work and highlight best practice.

As well as morning yoga, attendees enjoyed a great Carlow welcome. Remember this is the county that only recently welcomed 300,000 people over three sunny days to the Ploughing (pages 17-23).

While Carlow PPN played host, the conference was organised by the National PPN Advisory Group.

BACKGROUND

Up to now, each PPN received €50,000 annually from the DRCD and at least €30,000 a year from the local authority to ensure each PPN has an office and a resource worker.

Since 2014, most counties have had PPNs and they have been a force for

good in counties where they worked well, amplifying grassroots ideas that might not otherwise get an airing.

While some PPNs operate fully independently, others are hosted by and/or staffed by officials on loan from the local authority.

PPNs were first introduced during former Minister Phil Hogan's time, after being recommended by a group headed by Fr. Sean Healy of Social Justice Ireland. They were designed to give communities more of voice in local government decisions.

Public Participation Networks support groups to influence decisions made about their communities.

Carlow PPN 

150TH ANNIVERSARY

An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, speaks with pride about Gandhi's Davitt connection



• Mr. Terence Juda, cultural attaché, planted an oak tree near the grave of Michael Davitt in Straide, Co. Mayo, on Oct. 2nd, on behalf of the Indian Ambassador. He is pictured here with author and campaigner Don Mullan and (in background) Justin Sammon, CEO, Mayo North East.

A statement was issued by An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, on the 150th anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi on October 2nd. It was read out at a special event held to mark the day held at the Michael Davitt Museum in Straide, Co. Mayo (full report: www.changingireland.ie).

The Taoiseach said:

“Mahatma Gandhi (was) a statesman whose commitment to peace and non-violence continues to be a source of inspiration around the world. As we know, his non-violent resistance movement was fundamental to the successful campaign for Indian independence, and it inspired movements for freedom and justice around the world.

“Less well known is that Gandhi himself attributed his own use of nonviolent resistance in part to his admiration of the Land League and its leader, Michael Davitt. 25 years ago, his grandson Arun Gandhi laid a wreath on Michael Davitt's grave in Mayo. And he unveiled a unique Davitt/ Gandhi Famine Memorial on the grounds of the former workhouse in Swinford, Co Mayo, where Davitt and his family once lived. The memorial quotes from both men and (it) challenges us ‘to continue the struggle for more just and equitable world’.

“We in Ireland recall with pride the links between these two iconic historical figures. Gandhi once said, ‘non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man’. His legacy continues to inspire Ireland's commitment to human rights, peace and security and the struggle for a more just and equitable world.”



• Don Mullan, gave a talk titled ‘Following Mahatma Gandhi and Michael Davitt: Why I chose the Path of Non Violence’.



• At the graveside of Michael Davitt on the 150th anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi.



• Don Mullan, with Mr. Terence Juda, in the Michael Davitt Museum.

It was highly praised by Emily Logan, chief commissioner of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, which provided support. It was the second major equality campaign in the county organised by the ‘Equality Sub Group’ of the Local Community Development Committee. With the project's permission, we reproduce here one of the posters featured in ‘Know Me’.

If you work or volunteer in a community setting or work in the public sector, this is one for the wall.

aspect to engage people. “It wasn't something from another country. It's very much to do with people in Monaghan.”

“The booklet presents statements that people in our community have heard said about them and it challenges those statements with the reality of the life of the characters,” said Bernie Bradley, Social Inclusion Development Officer, Monaghan County Council.

“Our work is based on the findings of a public consultation where racism, discrimination and exclusion were highlighted consistently,” she said. The ‘Know Me’ project became a huge success.

Last year, Monaghan County Council produced an eye-catching booklet and exhibition that got a lot of people talking.

The ‘Know Me’ booklet was published in March, 2018, followed by an exhibition in April, to challenge discrimination and stereotyping.

The booklet features a series of fictional characters based on real-life experiences of discrimination in Monaghan. The characters are mainly linked to the grounds of the Equal Status Act.

Liam Bradley from Monaghan County Museum said the stories are all from local people. “It had to be local stories. It had to have that local

ONE FOR THE WALL!

- Thanks to Monaghan County Council

My name is Ahmad, I came to Ireland from a large refugee camp. I was very happy in my life in Syria, I was a teacher in my community. War destroyed my community, my life and my family. War killed my parents, and my friends. I spent 3 years in a refugee camp with my children. The Irish Government offered us refuge in their country. **Stereotypes hurt me, I am not ripping off a system, I did not choose this life, I did not choose to watch my parents die, but that is the life I was given**, I am so grateful to Ireland for giving me and my children peace and safety. I am happy to work and to repay the Irish Government with the same kindness they gave me.

My name is *Ahmad* and I am a
Syrian Refugee

My message to YOU,

'KNOW ME' not the Stereotype

“IF THEY'RE NOT
HAPPY, LET THEM
GO BACK
WHERE THEY
CAME FROM”

“THEY'RE NOT HERE
FOR ASYLUM, **THEY'RE**
HERE FOR WHAT THEY
CAN GET”

LIBRARIES DEVELOPMENT

100 'Open Libraries' due by 2022

The 'My Open Library service' grew in October to include 12 more libraries, bringing to 15 the total number open from 8am to 10pm, seven days per week, all year round.

There are 333 public libraries in the State and the Department of Rural and Community Development aims to have "up to 100 libraries" providing the service by 2022 and "a further 200 by the end of 2027".

The 12 new areas now providing the 'My Open Library' service are:

- Ferbane, Co. Offaly
- Deansgrange, Co. Dublin
- Muine Bheag, Co. Carlow
- Trim, Co. Meath
- Dungarvan, Co. Waterford
- Gorey, Waterford
- Ardee, Co. Louth
- Castlecomer, Co. Killkenny
- Ballymahon, Co. Longford
- Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan
- Nenagh, Co. Tipperary
- Arklow, Co. Wicklow

The libraries that piloted the service are in Tullamore (pictured right and inset) and Banagher in Co. Offaly and Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo.

Of note, normal staffing levels and staff hours are not impacted.



LIBRARIES - HOW DO YOU LIKE YOURS?

- Clare Mulvanney, author and trainer

"Have I mentioned that I love my local library. In a little village on the edge of a continent, the world is delivered, then page by page revealed. These are not just books, but lifelines and gateways, portals and platforms. And the library a threshold to becoming."

You can follow Clare on Instagram (and Facebook): @onewildlife



US AUTHOR & SOCIOLOGIST:

Libraries save lives & can save democracy

US author, Eric Klinenberg, says that when we invest in social infrastructures such as libraries, parks and community childcare facilities, we reap all kinds of benefits. When we don't, the opposite is true.

The grandest of the 2,500 libraries that capitalist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie built were, he said, "palaces for the people".

That gave Klinenberg the title for his book, published last year. The full title is 'Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life'.

In it, Klinenberg, a sociologist, argues that the future of democratic societies depends



• Eric Klinenberg - his book sounds encouraging.

on shared values and on shared spaces: "the libraries, childcare centers, bookstores, churches, synagogues, and parks where crucial, sometimes life-saving connections, are formed".

In the mid-90s, after a deadly heatwave hit the USA, Klinenberg discovered that places with a strong social infrastructure had low death rates, because - he said - people knew each other and checked in on the most vulnerable to see they were okay. In other words, those places were real communities and libraries were a crucial part of their social infrastructure.

His book is available to buy online. Of course, you could simply ask your local library to purchase a copy and let everyone have the chance to read it!

Follow him on Twitter: @EricKlinenberg

- BY KIRSTY TOBIN