

Issue 68 - Spring 2020

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CHANGING IRELAND

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

COMMUNITIES WANT CHANGES IN CHILDCARE (AND MORE)

Early Years campaign

Last big march of 2020?

30,000 marched

Pay rates painful

Also: CE pensions protest

GOOD NEWS IN A TIME OF CORONAVIRUS

my
journey
DISTANCE TRAVELLED TOOL

Inside - pages 11-15

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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.

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The Irish Local Development Network CLG is supported by The Scheme to Support National Organisations which is funded by the Government of Ireland through the Department of Rural & Community Development.



• “We teach respect. Now show us some!” said staff from Spraoi Le Cheile in Dungloe, Co. Donegal. Photo by Kathleen Cook.



• “We all attended the protest in Dublin looking for the recognition we deserve from the government.” - Claremount Creche and Montessori, Co. Mayo.



• “It was an amazing day and we were so proud to be standing up along with all these people from all over the country showing commitment and unity,” said Banteer Community Childcare staff.



• Photo supplied by SIPTU which asked, “Is it a coincidence that the Early Years sector is staffed mostly by women and has shockingly low pay?”

See inside for reports...

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:



An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail
Department of Rural and
Community Development



2-3 Try the ILDN for jobs! / Early Years march / Journalism opportunities

4 EDITORIAL: Coronavirus V Communities

5 FLASHBACK: Female empowerment in 2001 in The Liberties with Linda Walsh

6-7 CAMPAIGNS: Why communities want change

8 SOCIAL ENTERPRISE: Grants rush

9 DIGI-SKILLS: An Cosán on the case

10-11 HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR TOMI REICHENTAL: Whispers lead to murder

11-15 MY JOURNEY: Of use to individuals & society.

16 LEADER: Supporting Meath River Rescue

17-19 INTERVIEW: Kevin McCarthy, Sec. General, Dept of Rural & Comm Dev't.

20-21 LIMERICK'S URBAN CO-OP: 24/7 success

22-23 NORTH DUBLIN: Showcasing successes

24-25 YOUTUBE: Mayo migrants show the way

26-27 DON MULLAN, EYE-WITNESS: Treasure peace

28 HSE: Coronavirus - The Facts

contents

WANTED: Freelance Journalist 12+hrs p.w.

CALL US TODAY!

We produce quality journalism and focus on people in communities who are changing Ireland.

We invite enquiries from freelance professional multi-media journalists at a pivotal time in Ireland's development. This position is now open. Ideally mid-west based. National role.

Full professional payrate & expenses.
The role and hours may expand.

Join us in showcasing best practice in communities across Ireland - online and in our print magazine.

We are also open to enquiries from recent media studies' grads and from people with experience in the Community and Voluntary Sector.

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CHANGING IRELAND

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'Changing Ireland' was established in 2001. Based in Moyross, Limerick.

W: changingireland.ie

- Community Development -
- Empowerment - Participation -
- Social Inclusion - Best Practice -
Solutions - Collective Action -

Communities v. Coronavirus / Good News



By the time you read this, communities and civil society across the country will be coming to terms with the challenges of coronavirus.

Collective action and engagement are at the core of

community development and practitioners are already adjusting their behaviour.

I had drafted an article comparing the potential impact of low, medium and high impacts from the virus, but parked it. Other well-meaning articles were also parked.

On the weekend that coronavirus came to Ireland, the Department of Rural and Community Development recommended that people follow the advice of the HSE and the National Public Health Emergency Team.

They later asked us to do likewise in this edition and we are doing so. We are in extraordinary times.

In striving for inclusion, we are all about engagement, reaching out and including the hardest to reach. This virus pushes society

in the opposite direction, towards social distancing. Let's take care. Be clever. Use technology. Let's engage in community management in new ways.

Communities often set the lead during crises and it is important we respond appropriately, as communities largely will no doubt (resources permitting).

Keep the bright side out. Keep in good humour.

Also, we have so much to celebrate. Here are three for example:

CAUSE TO CELEBRATE I

Let's celebrate the fact that communities rose once more and made their voices heard nationally before the election. The campaign for proper pay and support in early years education hit a high mark during the election campaign with 30,000 people marching in Dublin.

The issue of low pay is a reality for many workers in the Community & Voluntary Sector and this impacts on communities as it becomes harder to recruit and to retain people. This is an important issue and one that could become even more important in the period

facing us. The new government will be aware of this now, thankfully.

CAUSE TO CELEBRATE II

Also cause for celebration is the launch in January of the brilliant new 'My Journey' Distance Travelled Toolkit (see pages 11-14). It gives community development workers something they wanted for decades - a way to qualitatively measure the value of their work. Counting heads only ever painted a partial picture and the new toolkit is welcome.

CAUSE TO CELEBRATE III

'Changing Ireland' is now in its 20th year!

Thanks to everyone involved, especially you, dear reader! Here's wishing you all individual and collective strength, resilience, wisdom and friendship.

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:

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Thanks To . . .

'Changing Ireland' thanks everyone involved in the production of Issue 68.

Front Cover:

Photo supplied by SIPTU.



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 its core-funder the Department of Rural & Community Development.

One thing we can be pretty sure about: Whoever invented hand sanitiser is rubbing their hands together right now.

Female empowerment in 2001 - with Linda Walsh in The Liberties, Dublin

In 2001, we featured an interview with Linda Walsh from The Liberties in Dublin and she appeared smiling on our front cover. At the time, other publications portrayed anti-poverty work in a bleak style. By contrast, Linda's smile showed what winning was like.

Online, we recalled Linda's story of struggle and success on March 8th, International Women's Day.

If it was possible, we would love to re-interview Linda for 'Changing Ireland'.

Originally from Clondalkin, our interviewee had been written off by her headmaster who told her family, when she was an adolescent, that she was never going to go far. I remember to this day Linda telling me how she felt about that.

BECAME AN EMPOWERED AND INSPIRING LEADER

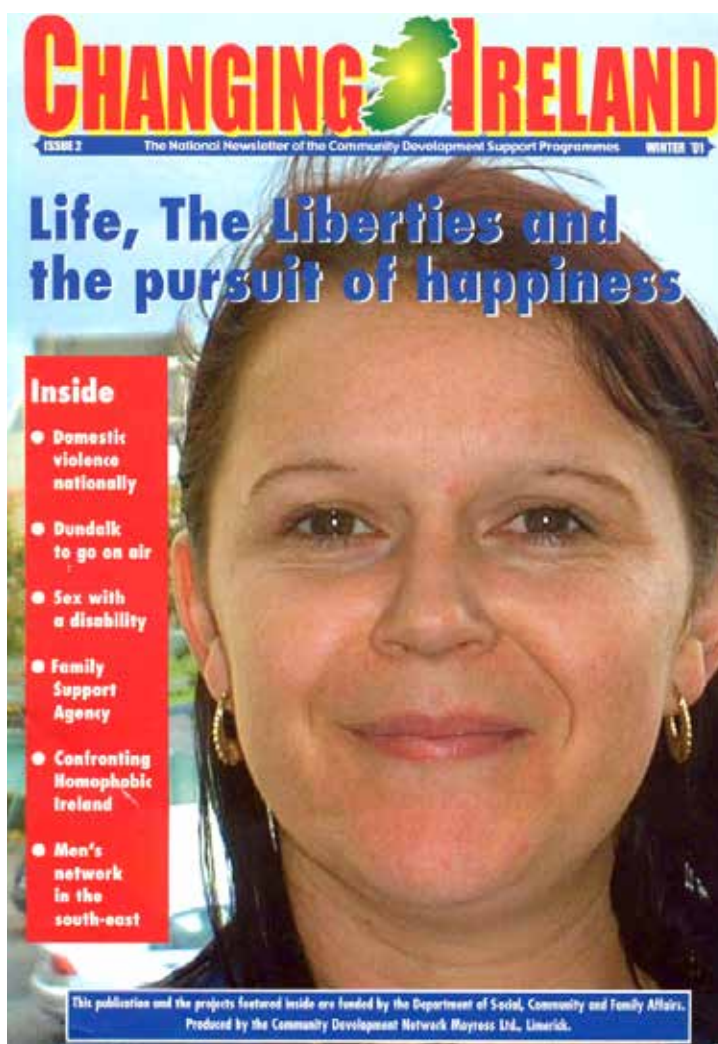
Linda faced poverty, gender inequality and class division. She grew up without many opportunities, left school early, worked in what we now call the gig economy and became a lone parent when she was 22. Though she became depressed when pregnant, she never stopped working and the birth of her daughter (Niamh) spurred her onwards.

She rose above it all to become an empowered and inspiring leader in the historic Liberties area of the capital.

In fact, she was the ideal person for her leadership role. She had real-life experience of the issues people faced, she lived in the area and she had volunteered locally and studied community development. Many others have followed a similar path.



• Above & below: Linda Walsh proved the headmaster wrong. Originally from Clondalkin, she was appointed project co-ordinator of School Street FRC in 2001, when this photograph was taken. Also in above photo: Elaine Diver.



Her realism, her cheery outlook and her belief helped us to reach out to readers with a story that conveyed what is so good about community development.

I remember clearly meeting Linda in her office on the second floor of a block of flats, shortly after she was appointed project co-ordinator of School Street Family Resource Centre.

The day I met her she was still pleased to have proven her former headmaster wrong. That man had demoralised her at a pivotal time in her life, but she proved him wrong.

The story was published in our second edition and in recent years we made calls and googled, but without finding Linda. She may have moved abroad. School Street FRC is still going strong.

DO YOU KNOW LINDA?

If anyone knows her, please contact us as, if is possible, we would love to re-interview Linda for 'Changing Ireland'.

Email: editor@changingireland.ie

In honour of International Women's Day, on March 8th, we reprinted Linda's story in full on our website.

You can access the full 2001 edition, which includes a half-dozen more pages on women's struggles - and indeed any of our magazines - via our archive.

• The front cover of our second edition, in 2001. From this month, March, this unique community publication enters its 20th year.

CAMPAIGN: Community childcare

ANALYSIS

WE DIDN'T PAY THEM AND NOW WE NEED THEM MORE THAN EVER

- Campaign in February saw 30,000 march in Dublin with more protests planned
- Why now more than ever we need community-minded childcare professionals

A magnificent campaign led by childcare professionals and voluntary management running community facilities at last began to win political attention in February.

That month, with support from SIPTU, campaigners finally made an impact when a protest march they had planned coincided with the general election.

Communities showed they had arisen: 30,000 people, mostly women marched. More protests were planned.

The majority of people marching were women and it is beyond a coincidence that thousands of underpaid and undervalued staff in early years education are female. There is a pattern here. If more men worked in this area, the pay would be higher. The ESB was traditionally a big employer of men. How do their wages compare?

Sadly, the last government didn't get it or failed to heed warnings. They regarded childcare as a



necessary intervention to ensure people were available to go to work. The model is flawed.

It does not take into account the value of work with the families the children belong to, especially in disadvantaged communities.

In 2016 and earlier, community childcare facilities warned they

faced closure. They were caught up in a perfect storm of cuts and red tape. Community facilities - managed by voluntary boards - could not be seen to engage in reckless trading.

Some have now closed. Staff with expensive qualifications left early years education in big

numbers. We lost precisely the type of people we need more than ever now with Coronavirus.

Society needs them. Call them back! Pay them! Our communities need caring professionals who understand how poverty, health and education are intricately linked.

- ALLEN MEAGHER

Civil society very proactive before election

Community Sector organisations knew what they wanted before General Election 2020.

The campaign for reform of early years education outshone others by the sheer numbers who took part, but there were many other concerns.

Issues highlighted included housing, rights for people with disabilities, action to end violence against women, and priority accorded to independent community development work. Low wages in the sector and soaring insurance costs were also highlighted. Community Employment supervisors highlighted the non-payment of pensions in a protest march in Dublin.

In the run-up to the February 8 poll, many representative national organisations published policy papers and manifestos to help voters make informed community-focused choices.

The Family Resource Centres National Forum (FRCNF) wants a dedicated government unit for Family Resource Centres that respects their autonomy and their unique community development model.

The Wheel called on the next government to recognise and support the value that the sector adds to society, to support sustainable funding models, and to streamline compliance systems.

MINISTER FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Active Retirement Ireland and Age Action want a

Minister for Older People and climate change action consistent with climate justice to protect people and the planet. They want the next government to make older people a priority and to ensure older people remain active, engaged and valued in their communities.

SOCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY

Community Work Ireland (CWI) were active members of the interdepartmental, cross-sectoral group that worked with the Department of Rural and Community Development to produce the five-year 'Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities' strategy. CWI also played a role in the development of the 'Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025'.

The latter was published the day the Dáil was dissolved and CWI wants to see both strategies implemented. The CWI also called for anti-racism measures and stronger hate crime laws.

HOMELESSNESS

Social Justice Ireland focused on a range of issues, including homelessness, an issue that came to prominence during the election. By November 2019, 10,448 people were in emergency accommodation, not including rough sleepers, 'couch surfers', victims of domestic violence in refuges, and others.

Understandably, Social Justice Ireland and other

groups have a long list of asks, as well as solutions.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

According to the Oireachtas Disability Group, poverty levels for people with disabilities have doubled (to 24%) in the last decade. The group is calling for an end to disability poverty and unemployment and to the housing crisis facing people with disabilities.

CLIMATE JUSTICE

The planet is at a critical turning point and World Vision Ireland, the Irish Environmental Network and the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) have together called on the next government to restrict the growth of the global 'fast fashion' industry.

"It's time to move fashion away from the pursuit of ever-more economic growth, which is incompatible with stopping further environment and climate breakdown, and with reducing global inequalities," said campaign spokesperson, Patrizia Heidegger.

PLAIN ENGLISH

Meanwhile, the National Adult Literacy Association (NALA) called on candidates to "avoid political jargon and use plain English". Did they listen?

For a longer version of this article, visit:
www.changingireland.ie





Community childcare staff & managment insist on change

The 'Big Start campaign' brings together educators, providers and parents wanting to transform the Early Years Sector.

"Simply put, the Early Years sector is in crisis," says SIPTU and their view has been endorsed by 30,000 people who marched in Dublin, on February 5th. (Garda estimated the turnout).

The campaign involves the Association of Childhood Professionals, the Federation of Early Childhood Providers, the National Childhood Network, the National Community Childcare Forum, Seas Suas and SIPTU.

Together they seek:

1. Funding doubled over the lifetime of the next government.
2. Pay increases as a first step towards professional pay scales.
3. A new funding model.
4. A streamlined inspection process.
5. Policies developed through negotiation and a co-designed approach.

"Parents are paying too much for childcare. Workers cannot survive on



• Going strong since 2001 - the Family Resource Centre National Forum.

low wages. Providers are struggling to break even," says SIPTU.

"The cause of this crisis is clear; a lack of State investment," it continues. "Ireland spends only 25% of the European average investment in Early Years services. While the government have made some progress we need to fundamentally change how we fund childcare into the future. Children deserve quality, parents deserve affordability and workers deserve a professional wage."

The organisers say they launched

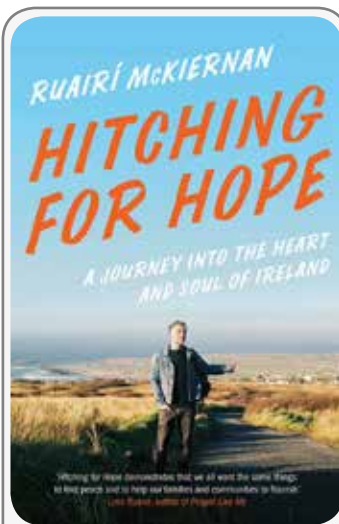
the campaign to "give children a Big Start" and the campaign sought "to become a strong voice that the Government cannot ignore". To that extent, it succeeded and brought workers, parents and providers onto the streets in great numbers.

Following the march, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Katherine Zappone, announced a public consultation on a new funding model, taking into account the views of childcare providers and workers.

W: <http://www.bigstart.ie>

Community Development principles:

- PARTICIPATION
- COLLECTIVE ACTION
- COMMUNITY VOICE
- INCLUSION
- IDENTIFYING LOCAL NEEDS
- MANDATED ACTION
- EMPOWERMENT
- ACCOUNTABILITY
- CHANGE



• McKiernan's book out in March. Find it in Eason's, Dubray's, O'Mahony's, most independent booksellers and on amazon.com

'My Journey' launch - story-telling videos



• If you're interested in 'My Journey Distance Travelled Tool' (see p11-14) see our recordings from the launch. Paul Rogers and John Lonergan told personal stories: <https://www.youtube.com/user/changingireland/videos>

BRIEFS

A MANIFESTO FOR NATURE

Birdwatch Ireland has produced a 'Manifesto for Nature' listing three pages of the actions necessary to address the biodiversity and climate emergency.

They want at least 30% of Irish land and sea areas primarily managed for nature by 2030. They also call for a new food and agriculture policy in line with nature.

"Ireland is in an unprecedented biodiversity and climate emergency. We need a sea change in the national response to it," it says. The manifesto is available online.

A Manifesto for Nature

Proposals to address the Biodiversity and Climate Emergency in Ireland



OVERDUE INCLUSION PLAN PUBLISHED

The repeatedly delayed publication of a commitment to address social exclusion has been published.

Following promises made at last year's Social Inclusion Forum, Minister Regina Doherty in January published the 'Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 - 2025'.

W: <http://bit.ly/InclusionRoadmap>

BINGO WIN!

In December, the Government did a u-turn after stirring consternation over plans to tax winnings from bingo nights.

There was a sigh of relief from players and community centres alike.

It was all over in a week - surely qualifying it as the fastest campaign win of 2019.



GRANTS: Cork examples

New social enterprise capital grant proves extremely popular

- 1,100 businesses applied in 3 weeks

A €1million fund announced in late October to support social enterprises around the country was vastly oversubscribed.

Over 1,100 hopeful enterprises applied for support, even though there was less than three weeks between the date the first round of funding was announced (Oct 23rd) and the closing date for applications (Nov 11th). Grants were provided to just over 100 applicants.

Thankfully, in mid-January, 106 more social enterprises benefitted when a second round of funding was delivered.

The Small Capital Grants for Social Enterprises scheme, from the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) provides grants of between €2,000 and €15,000 for equipment, repairs or refurbishments to enable social enterprises to improve their delivery of services.

The scheme was launched following the publication last summer of the country's first National Social Enterprise Policy.

Funding comes from the national Dormant Accounts Fund and, at local level, the scheme is being administered by the country's 49 Local Development Companies (LDCs).

TAKE TWO!

Cork City Partnership was among the LDCs to support social enterprises in applying for the first round. Here are two examples showing the benefit of the scheme to successful applicants.

DEAF ENTERPRISES

Deaf Enterprises of Ballinlough Road, Cork, was set up in 1987 in response to the high rates of unemployment among Cork's deaf community.

"We are Ireland's only dedicated employer of the deaf and hard of hearing community," said manager, Conor Cahill. He said they will use their €10,000 grant to buy a Prefab workshop and training facility.

"It will allow us to increase our services in line with our three-year plan," he added.

BENCHSPACE CORK

Benchspace Cork, is the first shared, not-for-profit design space in Ireland. Based in the Marina Commercial Park, in Cork city, it was also successful.

It planned to spend its grant of



• *Rory Drinan, a designer / maker with Benchspace Cork, relaxes in one of his creations. Follow him on Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/rorymakes/>*



• *Left: Tom Meagher and Yvonne Quilligan of Cork City Partnership, Fergus Somers and Lisa Petersheim of Benchspace and Dan Daly of Cork City Partnership, at the awarding in Cork of Small Capital Grants for Social Enterprises.*



• *Right: Benchspace Cork participants with candleholders (for sale via the website - see below).*

€15,000 to buy two specialist wood planing and processing machines.

Both social enterprises were invited to apply for the grant through Cork City Partnership as part of the Irish Local Development Network in October. The DRCD made the decision on the grant allocations in December.

MORE INFO

About the scheme:

<http://bit.ly/socentgrants2019>

Cork grant awardees:

<http://deafenterprises.ie>

<https://benchspacecork.ie>



• *At the awarding of the Small Capital Grants for Social Enterprises, in Cork: Dan Daly and Yvonne Quilligan of Cork City Partnership, Tony Sheridan, John O'Mahony and Vincent O'Donovan of Deaf Enterprises.*

NEWS

TRY AN COSÁN'S DIGITAL SKILLS ASSESSMENT TOOL



• Heydi Foster Breslin, CEO of An Cosán, and Maria Flanagan, co-ordinator of An Cosán's Virtual Community College.

Nine out of ten jobs by 2030 will require digital skills, yet only half of Irish people possess basic digital skills.

All adults who do not possess digital skills across the five competencies of the European Digital Competence Framework (Digcomp) are increasingly being impacted by the digital divide.

It particularly is impacting on low skilled workers, elderly citizens, people with disabilities or literacy issues, says An Cosán.

The community education project - 30 years in existence - are piloting a digital assessment tool to help educators and learners to understand their digital competence.

"It covers all basic level digital competencies on DigComp," said Maria Flanagan of An Cosán's Virtual Community College. "Our

'Digital Stepping Stones' assessment tool makes it easy for people to find out what digital skills they have, and where they need to upskill to fill any gaps in their basic digital skills."

As a nation, Ireland holds a top 10 position globally in relation to our proportion of STEM graduates from third level. But the Digital Economic Society Index 2018 report found that in Ireland "only 48 % of individuals have at least basic digital skills". This is one of the lowest levels in the entire European Union (and well below the EU average of 57%).

Speaking at to the Oireachtas committee, former An Cosán VCC CEO Liz Waters said: "There is increasing recognition globally that entire sectors of employment are threatened by digital innovation. Most types of jobs will either change, be

lost through innovation or grow rapidly in advancing sectors and a third of jobs in Ireland are at "high risk" of being affected by digitalisation".

Ms Waters explained that An Cosán is working with corporate partners to tackle Ireland's digital divide and called for a unique tri-partite model – including corporate, public and community sectors – to come together to address the digital skills gap in a national context.

An Cosán is inviting projects in the community education sector to participate in the pilot to trial their new tool and test the effectiveness of using technology to understand a person's digital competence.

Contact m.kelly@cosan.ie for further information.

NEW HEAD OF AN COSÁN: HEYDI FOSTER BRESLIN

Heydi Foster Breslin is the new CEO of An Cosán, the country's largest community education organisation.

The mission of An Cosán - (Gaeilge for 'The Path') - is to bring about social equality and an end to poverty through community-based adult education, the provision of early years supports and empowering social enterprise development.

Over 30 years, An Cosán has provided pathways to empowerment through community education.

Recently, the organisation expanded its reach to a national scale using technology to deliver a range of virtual learning

courses.

Originally from Guatemala, Heydi has extensive experience across countries in advocating for equality, human rights and providing social services to minority groups.

Prior to An Cosán, Heydi was CEO of Misean Cara, an Irish development agency working with some of the most marginalised and vulnerable communities in the world.

She has been a Commissioner of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission since 2014. She was reappointed by the President for a second five-year term in 2018.



• Newly appointed - Heydi Foster Breslin.

"We know that educating women empowers them so that they can lift themselves and their children out of poverty, and lead their communities with them." - An Cosán



ASK HORACE!

Horace has answers to the trickiest Community & Voluntary Sector conundrums. Email the ed (see p4) & he'll pass your query on.

I CAN'T HANDLE IT!

Dear Horace,

Our office administrator insists because of the constant storms on parking her bicycle inside the doorway. I keep getting poked in the ribs by the handlebars. Should I puncture her tyres?



Yours,
Bike Blues

Dear BB,

Have you spoke to her about it? Obviously you feel you've been saddled with a big problem.

Tyre puncturing will not solve it. Sawed off handle bars would seem more appropriate and could start a new craze.

You could get cross and bar her bike or you could apply for a refurbishment grant to make space, but that could start a whole chain of events you might regret.

Horace McDermott

NON-STOP QUESTIONNAIRES

Help me Horace!

Working in the community is rewarding, but over the last number of months I've been inundated with questionnaires.

What can I do about this?

Yours Sincerely,
Con Sulted



Con,

You have three options:

1. Ignore the questionnaires.
2. Get a student on placement to fill them out for you.
3. Just get on with it and do them.

Now please circle the option that most describes how you found this advice:

HELPFUL _____

VERY HELPFUL _____

VERY VERY HELPFUL _____

COULDN'T BE MORE HELPFUL _____

Now, kindly add a few lines outlining how my advice helped and send it with a cheque for no less than €50 to . . .

Yours Truly,
Horace McDermott

INTERVIEW

Suzi Diamond and Tomi Reichenthal are Ireland's two last remaining Holocaust survivors. As they age, their voices grow

TOMI: "It starts with whispers, then

When **Ray Lucey** spoke to **Tomi Reichenthal**, one of the last two Holocaust survivors living in Ireland about the Nazi exterminations and warned about the future of humanity if things continue as they are.



• Ray Lucey reports.

Thursday, January 16th, 2020 was a historic occasion for the Tullamore Toastmasters. That was the day they had the honour of hosting Tomi Reichenthal, Holocaust survivor and human rights campaigner.

A capacity crowd of around 250 people heard that, when he was just nine years old, the Nazis imprisoned Tomi and his family in the Bergen-Belsen forced labour camp. Over the course of World War II, 70,000 Jews perished there. That astronomical figure included 35 members of Tomi's family.

He had many haunting experiences. One in particular stuck with him: When his 76-year-old grandmother died in the camp in March 1945, young Tomi had to watch as her body was dragged from their hut and thrown on top of a wheelbarrow already overloaded with dead bodies, then dumped on the piles of corpses outside.

Talking publicly about these events makes them real for Tomi all over again, and he now relives them, feeling them in a way he didn't at the time.

"When I was a kid, I didn't feel the dehumanisation [of wearing the yellow star], but now I feel how dehumanised I was at the time," said Tomi. "This sort of overcomes me. Imagine. I had to wear this thing so people can point their finger at me as I am a Jew."

While none of us can truly understand the horrors and suffering young Tomi faced, it is without doubt that he fully understands the ecosystems and behaviours that led to the waking nightmare he found himself in. Now, with all the benefit of hindsight, Tomi can see the same attitudes rising again.

"It starts with whispers, then abuse, and the final stage was murder," he said "That's how it started in the 1930s. As time went on, everyone was a bystander. You must not be a bystander. At the time, nobody did anything, and when they realised what was going on it was too late."

Tomi had stark warnings for those alive today, especially the younger generations. He believes we have to remain vigilant, particularly in a world where fake news, racism and discrimination are increasingly visible and prevalent.

"[Refugees] now have a similar experience [to the Jews during World War II], where the abuse is going on. People are running away and want a chance to live somewhere. They are not doing



it to better their lives. They're doing it out of necessity.

"The Irish people went all over the world, facing starvation and hunger. They were welcomed everywhere, but now, when other people are needing some sanctuary, Ireland is not very enthusiastic to do anything about it, which is again very sad. A couple of hundred refugees? It's nothing. We could have taken more, and we should take more."

It's not just in relation to those from outside Irish borders where Tomi is seeing troubling

signs. He has seen the situation surrounding Travellers, and heard much of the vitriol and hate speech directed towards them, often by people in power.

"I think there should be repercussions for people [who use hate speech, then hastily apologise later]. These are the things I am talking about – a whisper in towns, and how it develops. If we don't stand up and say, 'It is not enough that you are apologising, because at the time you said it, you meant it'... It shouldn't be allowed to get any further. They should resign or be

grow louder.

it's murder"

and, he talked

forced out, absolutely. That's my opinion."

As Tomi utilises his personal story to warn against a repetition of history, it should come as no surprise that he views fake news and historical revisionism (such as Holocaust denial) as incredibly dangerous.

"You have to have accurate, truthful history so things are not repeated," he said. "I am keeping the subject of the Holocaust alive. I'm making sure [people know] that the largest tragedy in human history not only happened, but that it was pre-meditated and very carefully planned. And that [the Nazis] nearly succeeded in their aim."

"It's different when a teacher talks about the Holocaust and when I talk about the Holocaust. When I speak, they will never forget it again."

And it's not just thin parallels that Tomi is now seeing. The hatred of Jewish people that drove the Holocaust is still very much in evidence.

"My own country, Slovakia – before the War, about 3% of the population was Jewish. There were about 90,000 Jews living there in Slovakia. Of course, the propaganda against the Jews was that if anything went wrong in Slovakia, it was the fault of the Jews. Today, again, the anti-Semites are blaming the Jews. There are only about 300 Jews left [in the country] – all these people are in their 80s or 90s, you know, old people – but still, when things go wrong, the anti-Semites say it's the fault of the Jews."

Not only is the hatred of the Jewish people still continuing in strongholds around the world, there are other comparable genocides taking place in our lifetime. In our recent history, Tomi mentioned Aung San Suu Kyi, and Myanmar's cleansing of Rohingya Muslims.

He has a particularly bleak outlook on how humanity is once more turning a blind eye.

"I sometimes say – and people condemn me for it – that what is happening now is worse than the Holocaust. I'm not saying this about the crimes or the killing but, at the time, people said they didn't know [what was happening]. And we have to take it on the face of it that there were people who didn't know. Today, they can't say that. We all see it on the television and we still can't do anything. I can't understand how the human race is letting these things happen."

At the root of it, Tomi's message is one of education, peace and respect. He encourages those who come to hear him speak to "embrace and respect the minorities in Ireland".

He has a warning, too, for those who choose a different path. Hate, he says, is self-defeating.

Instead, he counsels, "make peace with your past, so it doesn't spoil your present".

* Ray Lucey conducted this interview jointly for 'Changing Ireland' and 'Travellers' Voice'.

'My Journey' speakers: John Lonergan, Anna Shakespeare & Kevin McCarthy



"We often take self-confidence for granted"

Former Mountjoy Prison governor, John Lonergan (above) was the keynote speaker at the launch in January of 'My Journey Distance Travelled Tool' (see following pages).

"I grew up when people hadn't the opportunity to reach their potential. I was born into poverty in Tipperary," he said.

"My parents left school at 6th class in primary school and that was the norm then. In Bansha, I remember the first two from our community to go to university, because we were all talking about them. We thought they were geniuses, though the weren't."

Society has changed for the better since and there are more opportunities: "In Ireland, we don't always recognise the amazing progress we've made."

He said it was "important to remember all that has been achieved" during his lifetime especially with regard to improved education.

"There's only one cure for poverty and that's education - in the wider sense - and it doesn't matter what they're learning, but if they're in a classroom they're making progress."

"People can change their lives, but not on their own," he said, stressing the importance of role models and of working with people in a non-judgemental and respectful way.

"That way frontline people can connect," he said.

"We often take self-confidence for granted," he said and told of how his mother was "conditioned" to believe that some things were too good for her: "Nothing is too good for any human being."

John spoke about the importance of not telling an individual what they need to do, but instead to say, "We will have to do something about this."

"There is a massive difference then. The person feels 'He's interested in me. We're going to work together on this.'"

He welcomed the My Journey tool and predicted that it "will be a wonderful help to people out there doing this."

In the prison service, Ireland adopted a personal development course from Canada: "They sold it as an alternative to violence programme and lots of prisoners took it up."

John recalled a prisoner others were afraid of saying to him, "The course has changed my life."

He said, "The other day, I went back to my cell and there was a prisoner in my cell robbing it. Normally I'd have stuck his head to the wall.

But, because of the course, I just said to him to get out."

"He might be back in prison again. But every little step is progress."

"And when things go backwards, remember that regression is part of the process, but (remind them) 'We still believe in you. We'll still do this together'."

He encouraged frontline community workers enjoy when their efforts culminate in a person rejoicing because they have changed their lives.

"People will say, 'We've done this ourselves'. And you can walk away quietly, taking none of the credit. You've done your job," said John.

PERSPECTIVE

Pobal CEO, Anna Shakespeare, said, "What's really important about the My Journey tool is the collaborative approach between groups in the sector and individuals."

From having a background in disability and social care, she is "really mindful" of the person-centred approach: "It was a core part of the work in the world I came from. I see the My Journey tool as being no different (to help) people reach their potential."

"The richness of the experience can (now) be captured and it gives us a different perspective on what works," she said.

She appealed for its widespread adoption: "If the tool is not used to its full opportunity, it is a lost opportunity by the Community and Voluntary sector."

The tool is a very simple questionnaire, suitable for anyone 15 years and up and it measures five soft skills areas.

During the piloting phase, the tool "found people who had previously hidden dyslexia, literacy or numeracy issues".

"It promotes dialogue and helps them reflect on barriers that stop them achieving goals. It is flexible, quick (to do) and it can be repeated and it tracks progress over time."

EXPECTATIONS

Kevin McCarthy, Secretary General of the Department of Rural and Community Development complimented those involved in the pilot, noting that, "The individuals found the tool has made a difference."

"Behind every number is a person with a story and sometimes it can be hard to measure this hidden work. The My Journey tool gives us a way to shine a light on this softer progression."

"More importantly, it can show the person how they're doing - in terms of personal development and self-confidence, which is the greatest benefit of this tool."

In terms of implementation, he said

"The Department does now expect every Local Development Company to use this tool. The aim is that by the end of the year all companies will be using this tool."

"While it won't be suited to every client, the frontline staff will use their own professional judgement for when and where it can be used."

"The My Journey tool won't be linked to funding and won't be used to measure (companies') performance," he added.

Community workers enthusiastic as 'My Journey Distance Travelled Tool' goes national

Guest speakers - John Lonergan, Anna Shakespeare and Kevin McCarthy - on January 30th introduced a new approach to community work with individuals.

People working in communities are enthusiastic about it, because it gives recognition and value to the work they are doing.

The "My Journey" tool is simple to use. It was proven to work with over 400 people in the pilot stage and over 2020 it will be adopted nationwide by community workers.



• At the national launch of 'My Journey Distance Travelled Tool'.

REPORTS & PHOTOS BY ALLEN MEAGHER

After 18 months of research and development, the new 'My Journey: Distance Travelled Tool' was launched nationally on January 30th.

In an event chaired by Pobal director Paul Skinnader, My Journey was unveiled to staff from local development companies, local authorities and other interested groups.

The My Journey tool – a joint project between the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) and Pobal – takes the form of a series of 27 questions that guide people towards identifying their needs and planning for their future. Community development workers can then further engage with and support those individuals in taking on multiple challenges. The tool is companion material for the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (2018–2022).

During the My Journey pilot phase, 15 Local Development Companies (LDCs) trialled the toolkit with 400 people and the results were impressive. My Journey has garnered international interest and

the OECD recently hosted Irish representative in Paris to show how the toolkit works and discuss the validation process.

At the launch - in Richmond Building, Dublin - the toolkit was introduced by DRCD secretary general Kevin McCarthy and Pobal CEO Anna Shakespeare. Other speakers included former Mountjoy Prison governor John Lonergan, who talk about the importance of personal journeys, and Northside Partnership CEO Paul Rogers, who told of his own journey and how his organisation is well-placed to use the tool.

A panel discussion led by Caroline Gardner (CEO, Quality Matters), featured Professor Catherine Comiskey (School of Nursing and Midwifery, Trinity College Dublin); Monaghan County Council's LCDC chief officer, Fintan McPhillips; Paul Partnership's coordinator of social programmes, Helen Fitzgerald; and Louth LEADER Partnership project coordinator Ina McCrumlish.

Sinéad Quinn from the DRCD's Social Inclusion

and Communities Unit and Lucy Pyne from Pobal conducted a session on the key principles and implementation supports of the new toolkit.

In 'Changing Ireland's Winter issue, we reported how the tool helped a Limerick-based immigrant in her 50s who became sick after 10 years of working in Ireland, losing her job and encountering "insurmountable" challenges as a result.

The tool helped to prioritise her issues and plan her future. The community worker who worked with this woman, Limerick City Community Development Project's Ann Bourke, was enthused by the toolkit.

"It was amazing," said Ann. It was very positive for me and for her."

Others testified to its value (see opposite) and the community workers present were impressed on the day. They left Dublin looking forward to incorporating it into their community work.

Some had wished for a tool like this 20 years ago.

MY VIEW



• Patricia Reilly

BIG THUMBS UP

Patricia Reilly, SICAP support officer in Wicklow County Council:

"I know for us in Wicklow that we're very supportive of the tool. We've been involved from the start in the pilot programme. County Wicklow Partnership has been very involved in it."

"What's really good is that they've involved the LDCs from the start."

"We're certainly giving it a big thumbs up. I know SICAP workers in Wicklow have found rolling it out with clients there was really beneficial."



• Theresa Ryan

PEOPLE WHO USED IT ARE VERY POSITIVE

Theresa Ryan, Department of Education, works in the unit responsible for the European Social Fund:

"The My Journey tool has the potential to capture the impact and contribution that participating in SICAP has made to individuals' lives."

"The people who have actually used it were very positive about it."

LEADERSHIP FROM FRONT

Sinead Quinn, DRCD: "Listen to your peers who are talking about how the tool can work. It will need leadership from the front."

"The Department is committed to this and we will work with you over the coming months."

The Department and Pobal are reviewing implementation supports to support the national roll out of the tool by SICAP workers.

PEOPLE'S POTENTIAL

TESTIMONY

INA: "I was astounded at the difference it made"

- Form has 27 questions, yet takes only minutes to go through
- Community workers dreamed of this 20 years ago

Louth LEADER Partnership was one of the organisations that helped in piloting the 'My Journey Distance Travelled Tool'. We spoke to Drogheda-based, Ina McCrumlish who co-ordinates the Partnership's programmes for employment activation and lifelong learning:

"We were working in the pilot phase and, yes, the 'My Journey Distance Travelled Tool' has worked. I was astounded at the difference it made to the outcomes we were able to achieve with service-users."

"They were able to quickly see that we were not sending them over to Seetac or the DEASP to get a job. We were looking at their whole capacity and areas to work on in relation to their personal development, their literacy/numeracy, to how they communicate."

"This is not just another form. The clue is in the title - it's a tool. It simply helps people to help themselves and gets them to realise their self-worth."

"It's a page of 27 questions and we can fill it in in three minutes. We've used the tool a lot. You don't need any extra set of skills to use it."

"It's gentle, easy, non-judgemental and it encourages self-reflection and there can't be any personal change without that. It helps people become the best version of themselves."

"Every community worker on the frontline, like myself, is already doing this job (but, until now, without this tool). We all know how to develop positive rapport, to be non-judgemental, the importance of unconditional positive regard."

"And the reality is the tool doesn't hamper that. It promotes it, because the person coming in to you gets a quick snapshot of themselves. They learn that it's not about them just getting a computer or healthcare qualification. There's no point in them having a certificate in, say, computers if they can't communicate, if they don't have self-worth, if they don't believe they can be anything they want to be. That's what our job is."

"Our investment is in people. We're all vulnerable - that's the human condition - and the one thing I found was that 'My Journey' takes a gentle approach. There's



• Ina McCrumlish

nothing there that is uncomfortable about it for the service-user."

"And it is the first time we've had a measurement on the qualitative work that we're all doing as frontline workers. It can produce statistically and in graphical format what has happened the person along the journey."

"You can ask participants to write testimonials and they'll say a programme was wonderful and that it changed their lives, but now we have a chance with this tool to back it up with qualitative information showing, in a graphical way, how people feel better about themselves, how people are progressing, how they're communicating. That's what people want."

"We were talking about this in the School of Education in UCD 20 years ago. This is the first time we've had a tool that measures the fabulous qualitative work that we're all doing. This is it."

"Sometimes, people don't realise the benefits in the beginning, but they sure do see the benefits when they fill it in the second time. You hear them say, 'I feel better about myself.'"

"It takes a collaborative approach to fill in the form. You as a community worker mightn't see the benefits the first day, but you will in a few weeks. If you believe in it (the tool) it will happen. If you don't think it is useful, it won't be, because you hadn't have the right attitude."

"Also, the tool works with every target group. And it's not a performance monitoring tool," she said.

Noel Spillane ready to try it

Noel Spillane, CEO of South West Kerry Development, said: "We weren't one of the 15 companies that piloted it. So we were interested in hearing from those that did."

"Local Development Companies have long argued for a way to capture the qualitative work we do with people, those soft outcomes that there isn't a statistic for. This tool provides a structured way to capture people's journeys."

"We'd be positive about it and we look forward to implementing it. However, it's important that it's not used as a monitoring or benchmarking tool. It should be down to frontline staff to decide who the tool will work with and won't."



• Noel Spillane

PEOPLE'S POTENTIAL

Paul Rogers talks of his own 'Distance Travelled'



By Allen Meagher

Paul Rogers, CEO of Northside Partnership, gave a powerful talk. He previously worked in the rag trade and spoke honestly about his years of panic attacks at the launch of the 'My Journey Distance Travelled Tool', a tool his organisation has found most useful.

"Thankfully, I didn't experience poverty, but I had my own challenges when I left school."

"I suffered with anxiety and from panic attacks. I worked in clothing industry for 15 years. I met my wife in Shamrock Apparel in Coolock and she was probably the first person who believed in me."

"The distance people have to travel is sometimes profound"

• Paul Rogers, Northside Partnership.



• Some of the attendance at the 'My Journey Distance Travelled Tool' launch.



• Caroline Gardner, CEO of Quality Matters; Ina McCrumlish, project co-ordinator, Louth LEADER Partnership; Fintan McPhillips, chief officer, Monaghan Local Community Development Committee; Helen Fitzgerald, social programmes co-ordinator, PAUL Partnership.

"The clothing industry was closing down and she said to me 'Why don't you apply for college?'"

"I said, 'I couldn't do that' and she said, 'No, you could.'"

"So, I applied to DCU when I was 32 years of age and I got accepted which felt amazing - someone else believed in me."

"Back then I wouldn't have been able to pick up the phone (at work) without first having to write down what I needed to say because I was that anxious about it. Today, I'm leading an organisation I'm extremely proud to lead and that informs my practice."

"Everybody has a life journey," he added.

Emphasising the "incredible power of conversations", he said it conversations led him to university and to jobs.

"But not everyone has the opportunity to have those meaningful conversations that might change your life."

Talking of people in the community his team work with, he said he was "acutely aware that our staff as frontline people may often be the only person in their world that might see potential in them that others do not."

"We're always tuned into anything that helps us with that," he added, pointing to the My Journey tool.

"At the moment, we're having a lot of problems from the impact of gun violence and drug crime. The young people who are being drawn into gang violence don't live in the same world I live in. I'd now consider myself middle class and distant, but I need to be able to understand their world to be able to offer them opportunities. The My Journey tool may help us understand that space a bit better."

He also pointed out that empathy was not universal: "Not every government department that I've met understands the challenges that the people we're working with face."

"If you grow up in a world of modest privilege, then you have a sense of entitlement. For many key people in leadership roles in private sector organisations or government departments, the ability to understand or to empathise isn't necessarily there. We're trying to close that cultural gap. The distance people have to travel is sometimes profound," he said.

IN BRIEF

THE KNOCK-ON EFFECT OF SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS



Louise Brogan works with Donegal Local Development Company as its individuals support manager:

"It's down to us to make sure we use the tool. Focusing on the individual can have a knock-on effect."

"Take a rural area without employment or prospects. If others see someone they were used to seeing sitting about the house now going out and doing something positive, that can have a real knock-on effect. It can be very important in a little, rural area, because next thing you know everybody's getting out and about. John's going because Mary went and so on. And next thing you know, you've changed a whole community," said Louise.

IN A NUTSHELL

My Journey is a validated tool which measures soft skills relevant to employment, education and training, and personal development.

It arose from a joint initiative between the Department of Rural and Community Development and Pobal, working closely with Quality Matters in TCD, and the tool was "co-created" with Local Development Companies.

To find out more about My Journey from Pobal, email: sicap@pobal.ie

Go to www.traininghub.ie to access My Journey training videos.

The speeches by all the main speakers featured here are available on 'Changing Ireland's Youtube page.

TOOL IS ONLINE

In due course, a My Journey app will be developed, says Pobal.

In the meantime, the tool is freely available to download from the organisation's website, at: <http://bit.ly/myjourneytool>

Access much more (links to training videos, a guidebook, full project report, usage principles, an info leaflet, etc) at: <http://bit.ly/Pobal-SICAP-DTT>

This tool will help you to better understand your personal and professional skills and to think about aspects of your life you would like to improve. If you repeat this tool a few times it will show any changes you may have made in these areas.

I voluntarily agree to fill out the tool and understand that it will be kept confidentially in my SICAP file and collated in an online system, and that the information (with my personal details removed) may be used to improve programme delivery. I understand I can withdraw my permission for the use of my personal data from My Journey at any time.

Please respond to the statements below from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree' thinking about how you have been feeling in the last month.

TITLE STATEMENTS	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
01 I can confidently complete forms and applications	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
02 My reading and writing are good enough for everyday life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
03 My maths is good enough for everyday life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
04 I am a confident person	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
05 I know what I am good at	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
06 I feel comfortable around people in a formal setting like work or education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
07 I can achieve things I set my mind to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
08 I am happy with some of the things I have achieved in my life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
09 I am comfortable trying new things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10 I feel I can make changes in my life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11 I feel I can work out most challenges that come my way	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

PLEASE TURN OVER

TITLE STATEMENTS	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
12 I feel ready to take the next steps towards my goals (for example in work or education)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13 I know what I would like to do in the next few years	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14 I have activities or hobbies I enjoy doing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15 I have opportunities to spend time with others doing things I care about	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16 I feel part of a social group, club or community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17 I have someone I can count on for support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18 I know people that I can ask for advice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19 I am comfortable speaking in a small group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20 I am good at expressing my views	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21 I am comfortable talking to people I do not know very well	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22 I am comfortable speaking to people in a position of authority (for example a boss or tutor)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23 I ask for help when I need it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

24 I am good at being on time for appointments, work or other activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25 I feel I have the right skills to find a job if I want one	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26 I feel I have the right skills to complete a course if I start one	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
27 I know how to get the information I need to help me with jobs, courses or other areas of my life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

FUNDING: Meath River Rescue



Rescuers faster and safer using new LEADER-supported equipment

- Help from Meath Partnership with the funding application made big difference

Last year, 133 people drowned, the majority of them men in tragic circumstances.

When a drowning occurs, bodies are usually recovered thanks in no small part to the many voluntary search, rescue and recovery groups.

Meath River Rescue is one such group and it has twice benefitted from LEADER funding.

The group - entirely volunteer run - was established in Navan in 1996 and now provides a service in Meath and adjacent counties.

Most voluntary groups balk at the administration and paperwork involved in submitting a request for LEADER funding, but Meath River Rescue turned to a knowledgeable local agency for support - Meath Partnership (one of 49 local development companies that provide countrywide coverage).

They have formed, over the years, a formidable bond with Meath Partnership.

1ST PROJECT

Meath River Rescue operates out of a facility in Navan that was part funded by LEADER during the 2007-2013 programme.

This funding, along with private funds raised locally allowed the group to spend almost €400,000 to build and equip the boathouse to store their boats and equipment adjacent to the river, allowing for a better, quicker service and response time.

This, in turn, facilitated the organisation to grow and today it has five divers, two trained counsellors, and all members have first aid and swift water training. The group operates seven boats, four vehicles, three jeeps and a van. However, equipment needs maintenance and replacing.

2ND PROJECT

Meath River Rescue's second major project aimed to update equipment that had become degraded due to wear and tear over time.

Conducting numerous search and rescue operations and even training can cause damage and wear on survival suits and engines as many of the riverbeds have objects in them which can cause snags and damage to diving gear and engines.

Also, each suit is custom-made for each diver.

MEATH PARTNERSHIP

Without their relationship and integration with Meath Partnership, the Meath River Rescue Service would not be in the position it is today.

They have built up a relationship with Meath Partnership that has been instrumental to their growth and development.

As this was their second time applying for LEADER funding, the organisation was familiar with the application process and organised the necessary paperwork ready to support their application. They then approached Meath Partnership and started the process.

TEAMWORK PAYS!

Meath River Rescue noted that a lot of behind the scenes paperwork is required to be successful, but it is achievable, especially with guidance from your local development company.

In regards to funding, ultimately this is an example of how local voluntary work and financial contributions and LEADER funds combine to sustain an excellent river rescue service.

75% FUNDING

As LEADER provides up to 75% of funding for projects the organisation had to come up with the remainder. Thankfully, the project is very well supported and local household and churchgate collections helped make up the balance.

RESULTS

Funding awarded under the 2014-2020 LEADER programme was used to buy six new custom-made survival suits and three new engines. These new engines that were purchased have push start buttons.

The older engines that the organisation use were pull cord engines. The push start engines allow the rescue team to have a quicker more efficient start, especially in emergency situations.

These new engines allow them to experience less delays that are habitual with pull cord engines, allowing them to provide a high quality rescue and recovery service, as well as ensuring the safety and effectiveness of the rescue team volunteers when carrying out their operations.

MORE INFO

<https://meathriverrescue.ie/>

<https://www.facebook.com/meathriver.rescue.1/>

COLLABORATION: This is the second in a series on LEADER. Thanks to

o 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.



2014-2020 LEADER PROGRAMME FUNDING

(i) Rural Development Programme	€15,832.53
(ii) Private / Own funds	€5,278.98

Total project budget (i)+(ii) = €21,111.51



National Rural Network



The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development:
Europe investing in rural areas



Ireland's EU Structural and
Investment Funds Programmes
2014 - 2020
Co-funded by the Irish Government
and the European Union



An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail
Department of Rural and
Community Development

A top level view of **bottom up dev't** Interviewing the Secretary General

- Kevin McCarthy, Dept of Rural and Community Development

From 2001, when 'Changing Ireland' was established until now, we've taken and continue to take a bottom-up approach to our reporting, shying away from focusing on CEOs and people at the top levels in the Community and Voluntary Sector.

To mark the beginning of our 20th year, we are giving them some space to share their views.

In this edition, we interview Kevin McCarthy, Secretary General with the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD).

For our next edition, we plan to interview Pobal's new head, Anna Shakespeare. (Send us your questions and we'll put them to her).

SOME BACKGROUND

From 2002 to 2010, we had the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DCRGA) which quickly became known as 'Craggy' due to its acronym and West of Ireland origins with Minister Éamon Ó Cuív in charge.

People in the Community and Voluntary Sector grew very fond of 'Craggy', seeing it as a well-made vehicle for supporting



• Kevin McCarthy and Anna Shakespeare at the launch of the 'My Journey Distance Travelled Tool'.
PHOTO: A. MEAGHER

communities. This was before cutbacks hit.

In May 2011, as the economy crashed, unemployment rose and other priorities came to dominate, the department was disbanded. For a time, 'Community' was attached to Environment and largely hidden from public view. The Rural and Gaeltacht functions were split up, with "rural" going to Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

Then, with the creation in 2017 of the new Department of Rural and Community Development, led by Minister Michael Ring, TD, community and rural development were back in the spotlight. Craggy Mark

II, as many saw it, was smaller, but bursting with potential and positive energy.

While funding has doubled since it's creation and it is a good news department, spoiled with success stories to tell, it doesn't get the same exposure as the Department of Health or the Department of Employment and Social Protection, both of which have budgets of around €20 billion.

This year, DRCD's budget is €308 million, says Kevin. There is understandably a strong focus on getting value for money from that investment and programmes have been monitored closer than ever before. The outcome - people on the ground know that collectively they are surpassing expectations and they can prove they are having real impact at local and national level. If only they had more funding!

In the background, it is the Department that makes the wheels turn.

Nearly three years into its existence and as the country awaits the formation of a new government, we interviewed Kevin. He is from Lucan, Co. Dublin.

(The interview was conducted on Feb 17th).

SPOTLIGHT: MISSION ACCOMPLISHED? NOT QUITE YET!

Secretary General, Kevin McCarthy, spoke about how the Department of Rural and Community Development has developed as an organisation since 2017:

MISSION

"Communities are at the very core of our objective and what we set out to achieve. Our core mission statement is: to promote rural and community development and to support vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities.

"A lot of thought went into that mission statement - as a set of values and ethos to govern (guide) the work of the department. It informs everything we do as a department."

POLICY

"In the last two and a half years, we've made considerable progress in developing the policy framework for government's interaction with communities."

"Our role is to broker the relationship between government, right across all departments and communities and citizens (by) strengthening the relationship, creating the framework, structures and mechanisms for that more effective engagement. Fundamentally, our role is to support communities to support themselves and to support community and voluntary organisations in their effort to build inclusive and sustainable communities."

"In developing the policy framework, it was governed by a co-production ethos - so it was (developed) in partnership with community organisations: about identifying what people want, what they need, and the kind of relationship that should evolve between communities and government to make the system work (better) for everybody."

COMMUNITIES

"(Meanwhile) we have been continuing to make investments in communities through the various funding programmes that the Department administers, all of which put communities at the centre," he said.



• Last year, €2.86 million in grant support was announced under the Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF) for works in Lahinch town and at Lahinch Seaworld. Nationally, €315 million was allocated to the RRDF for the period 2019 to 2022.

The Fund aims to "revitalise rural Ireland by supporting self-sustaining projects in towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000". RRDF applicants have to do a certain amount of fund-raising themselves to qualify. To find out more about the RRDF, visit: www.gov.ie/drcd



An Roinn Forbartha
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INTERVIEW: Sec. General, Dept. of Rural and Community Development

KEVIN MCCARTHY: "We support people and sustainable communities"

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

If Kevin McCarthy could only convey one message to community development workers and people working, paid and voluntary, at every level in communities, it is this:

"What they do every day matters. It matters in the lives of the people they're interacting with on a daily basis. I want them to know that this is recognised, understood and appreciated."

"I know the perception can grow when you're struggling on the ground - within a big system - that you're under-appreciated, under-valued and that the importance of what you're doing isn't recognised. If there's one thing I'd like them to hear from this, it's that we do see that, we do recognise it and we do understand it. We just want to work out how we can better support it."

PROUD OF FRONTLINE WORKERS & STAFF

"All the programmes we're running are high-impact programmes."

He is "very proud" of what is being achieved on the ground and by his team in establishing a new working government department to support that work.

The Department of Rural and Community Development was set up in mid-2017 and Mayo TD, Michael Ring, was appointed Minister.

"The department was newly created without a corporate spine (and) a lot went into setting up the structures," said Kevin. Its mission is to support people to create "vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities".

"We now have a good blend of experienced staff and new recruits and we also have the benefit of having an energetic and passionate Minister in Michael Ring TD."

"All the programmes we're running are high-impact programmes and, in money terms, our (department's) budget has pretty much doubled," he said*.

Take two programmes: "The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund and the Town and Village Scheme are brilliant. They create the capacity for a community to set an ambition for itself and provide the means to realising that ambition."

POLICY & IMPLEMENTATION

The early emphasis was on developing long-awaited policy. People passionate about social enterprise, for example, had been working away for many years without national guidance or targeted support. Now, it's full steam ahead for social enterprises.

"The policy architecture is now very well developed. Last July, Minister Ring launched a new Social Enterprise Policy to support the growth of



• Kevin McCarthy in his office in Trinity Point, Leinster Street, Dublin, smiling as he nears the end of his interrogation.
PHOTOS: A. MEAGHER

social enterprise. In August, we launched the new 5-year Strategy for the Community and Voluntary Sector. And we have a new National Volunteering Strategy (near completion) which we hope to publish shortly into the term of the new government."

"The next stage is seeing how effectively we now implement what we set out to achieve. We have to build on the momentum we have generated in establishing the policy framework." **

COMMUNITIES AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

"Ultimately, what we're about is supporting communities to support themselves. It's not about government imposing solutions. Ideally, you want everyone in the community to feel included and empowered," said Kevin.

This means that people in communities should be able to feel comfortable to "put forward their

ideas" that contribute to a vision for the future of their community. In the most disadvantaged communities, or in communities where there is a high turnover within the population (eg people renting in Dublin, or living in Direct Provision) this is a challenge. People feel disempowered.

However, as Kevin points out, the Department fully recognises that "some communities are much further down the road than others. Some are better equipped to avail of opportunities."

He said it was "a challenge" for the government and the local authority system to clearly identify which communities need more help and to devise "mechanisms to provide that extra capacity support they need".

DROGHEDA

Drogheda stands out immediately as a town in need of much more support. In January, An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, joined other public figures marching in solidarity with the local community. So unprecedented has the violence been that

Rural and Community Development

people to create vibrant, inclusive

Drogheda's troubles became one of CNN's "most read" stories in February.

Kevin pointed out that, in response to gangland issues in Dublin's north east inner city, the government responded at the highest level, led by then Taoiseach, Enda Kenny. He sees it is sensible to "see what elements of that model could potentially be replicated" in Drogheda and other areas.

INCLUSION PROGRAMME'S "MASSIVE IMPACT"



• Over 100 people attended an open day in Monaghan on social farming in January, 2019. The initiative is supported by SICAP. Above: Family members Corina, Christopher and Patrick Corrigan with Martin Hannigan, participant.

The Department's annual budget increases are seen as a sign "of a commitment on behalf of the government" and an appreciation of the impact of programmes at community level.

"The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) is a good example of how relatively small investments can have a massive impact on the lives of individuals, their families and also community groups. It supports the most marginalised and disadvantaged in society."

"Obviously, we make the case every year for an increased budget and we have good data from SICAP, but it's the stories behind the numbers that are richer in showing the impact."

He pointed to the launch nationally of a new tool, or approach, to helping people transform their lives - the 'My Journey Distance Travelled Tool' which also helps the Department and others to see the impacts of SICAP support for individuals. (For more, see pages 11-15).

"The 'My Journey' tool is a new way to try and capture the impact. This is about capturing personal stories of improvement, of development and of growing self-confidence. We wish to tell these stories better all the time, to support the case for further investment."

LISTENING TO ALL VOICES

Asked "What group in society don't we hear enough from?", Kevin agreed that "shame and stigmatisation often stop people from speaking out".

"That is the challenge for government, to make sure the voices of the most vulnerable and the most under-represented are heard. It's something we should consistently pause and think about: Who are

"Who are the voices we're not hearing from?"

the voices we're not hearing from?"

"There are lots of advocacy groups, but we need to look out for those who have most to fear from having their voices heard - asylum-seekers, or ex-prisoners, for example, to ensure their concerns are heard and understood."

RAISING AWARENESS

"The next phase of where we're going (in regard to the policy framework) is delivery and making it work and a key element is raising awareness, for example, of the potential of social enterprise."

"We have developed a very strong team around our communications function and, over the last 12 months, there has been a lot more outreach activity from the Department."

"Last year, we ran a 'Rural Opportunities' campaign and the 'Helping Hands' campaign. This is the department getting out on the ground to talk to communities - to show what's possible, what supports are available and what other communities have done."

"There are so many positive stories and I see our role as being to support ideas generated by communities. The more you can share the ideas and experience, the more you will spark new ideas and experience."

"Recognition is important to us only as a means to an end. Our mission is about supporting vibrant, sustainable, inclusive communities. We want to inspire people to see the opportunities for themselves."

"That's really at the core of it. It's not about building a department brand. It's about communities learning what government supports and programmes can help them achieve for the people in their communities," he said.

"We'd love an RTE series running five nights a week to showcase all the wonderful human and community stories," he said.

In February, by coincidence, RTE's afternoon 'Today Show' broadcast a series of weekly reports to "Celebrate Communities" nationwide. (Bravo!)



• People getting advice at a 'Helping Hands' event in Ballina, Co. Mayo. A half-dozen such events were held around the country. Read our report at: <http://bit.ly/fundsawarenessBallina>

COMMUNITY CAMPAIGNS

Asked about campaigns by people involved in early years education and in community employment, which led to marches in Dublin recently, Kevin said:

"I don't want to comment on the specifics of any particular campaign, but more generally community development and local development really has its roots in community activism. It's about people on the ground identifying a better future for themselves, for their families and their community and agitating. Where people are exercised about wanting a better life for their community, that's really positive."

"I certainly wouldn't see activism as a negative. Quite the contrary. The challenge for us is to create the channels for that energy to be communicated in a way that can have a positive impact."

NEED FOR MORE YOUNG COMMUNITY LEADERS

What if we gave the Secretary General a magic wand?

One concern he has become aware of - which he would like to wave a magic wand at - is the low number of young people becoming community leaders.

"It came through in consultations (on the new rural policy) that there is a generational challenge around trying to engage more young people. Particularly in rural communities, they're relying on the same people they were relying on 20 or 30 years ago, to continue to take on all the responsibilities. There are people who find themselves in community leadership positions who would love to pass on the torch and find that they can't."

"I don't want it to come across as an ageist issue, because it's not. It's about ensuring there's an engagement across all the age groups."

"It's something we need to think about in terms of our National Volunteering Strategy. How do we encourage young people to put themselves forward for leadership positions? It is identified as a gap," he said.

FOOTERS

* As Kevin pointed out, not wishing to exaggerate success, the budget growth includes national initiatives such as the Community Services Programme being moved from another Department into DRCD and the establishment of the Rural Regeneration Fund.

** That involves:

- Creating a more effective set of supports for Community and Voluntary organisations.
- Better defining the funding between the sector and government.
- Making mechanisms such as Local and Community Development Committees and Public Participation Networks work more effectively.
- Raising awareness of what's there and what's possible.

As well as "ensuring that communities are aware of what's available," the Department also wants to see that communities "have the capacity and supports to be able to avail of those supports".

CO-OPs: Rural adventures in resilience

LIMERICK

City's food co-operative fills a warehouse

- Pragmatism and principles combine for success at 'The Urban Co-op'

- It's also a company, a social enterprise and will soon be a charity

Almost daily, Anne Maher is on site in Ballysimon Industrial Estate, Limerick, as a volunteer and she clearly sees the rewards of everyone's hard work developing Limerick's 'Urban Co-op'.

"We've moved three times in seven years and grown each time," said Anne, one of seven directors serving on the co-op's voluntary board of management. The co-op is now in a modern warehouse.

They hope to stay put now and have fabulous floorspace is in an ideal venue (albeit poorly served by public transport).

The co-op is open seven days a week.

"We strive to facilitate the co-operative principles," said Anne.

The co-op's membership has shot up from 300 members at the start to over 2,000 members today.

"Our money is going into the local economy. We have nine staff and 300 suppliers including 60 local farmers," said Anne.

But volunteering is tough. Anne recalled "many a sleepless night while serving as treasurer" particularly in the early days.

Despite growing, it remains firmly

community-based, membership-led and supportive of volunteers.

The members took a pragmatic approach from the start, recognising that not so many funders are interested in co-operatives.

Anne said that the co-op is set up as a company, but operates according to co-operative principles and this works "very well," said Anne. Recently, it set out to achieve charitable status. The co-op also qualifies as a social enterprise.

"You don't have to be just a co-op, or just a social enterprise or just a charity. Last year, we were one of the winners of the Social Innovation Fund and were put on their accelerator programme. We learned how to measure our value and we can say for sure that 'The Urban Co-op' is a value-added place for Limerick."

The organisation has moved away from a dependency on grants. In 2018, their revenue was split 50/50 between sales income and grants. Today, the sales/grants split is 90%/10%.

The co-op takes on volunteers and works closely with organisations with

responsibility for supporting people with intellectual disabilities. A lot of people also go to the co-op on work experience. And, it takes on people doing community service at the behest of the courts: "Some of them have asked can they stay on afterwards and volunteer, they liked it so much. We were delighted," said Anne.

It's a busy place - with 500 customers spending €13,000 weekly.

People come for three reasons - to support local suppliers, for the environment and for their health.

"They have to eat! It's also a nice, safe, social space. People come and play music, especially on Saturdays. People come to us with ideas and we try to facilitate them. For instance, we aim to have zero waste."

"In terms of promotion, Facebook is good, but word of mouth is best," said Anne.

Call in, buy wholesome food and spread the word. Or learn how to set up your own urban co-op: Visitors are always welcome to call for organised tours, as UCC students did recently (see right).

W: theurbanco-op.ie



• 'The Urban Co-op' in Limerick serves over 500 customers weekly and is seen as a safe, friendly, welcoming - indeed musical - place.

MUNSTER

Follow the Corkonians trip online or visit these superb farmers yourselves!

If you wished to get a Munster view of how environmentally sound farming practices are evolving in Ireland, check out the places UCC students recently visited.

Beware! If new to this field (pardon the pun) you may have to google some of the sustainable farming terms.

The students* set out on their trip because of the importance to Ireland of farmers and their expertise in knowing how to transition to greater sustainability, said lecturer, Dr. Noreen Byrne: "Among farmers, there is lots of experimentation going on. Farmers are not the enemy."

The group began with a visit to Clondarrig Farm where they met John McHugh, an organic dairy farmer and regenerative farmer. Clondarrig's website alone is inspiring: <https://clondarrig.com/> There they teach community resilience, through nurturing nature and by learning "community and traditional skills".

They were also greeted there by Dave Beecher who is a member of the Danú Farming Group, their aim being to learn how to implement the basic principles of Biological Farming. (Twitter: @DanuFarming). This is an EU-funded trial on 12 farms that are focused on transitioning to regenerative farming.

In Coolbawn, outside Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, the Corkonians met Pat O'Mara who runs a big dairy farmer. A Nuffield Scholar, he is researching how to make the Common Agricultural Policy work properly for farmers.

In Limerick city, the group visited the Urban Co-op and then, as darkness closed in, they met Tom Sack, a Limerick dairy farmer who is practicing Korean Natural Farming. (<https://www.irishexaminer.com/breakingnews/farming/farming-as-its-ferment-to-be-korean-natural-farming-in-ireland-975876.html>)

* The UCC Masters in Science students are studying co-operatives, agri-food and sustainable development.



• Low-fat, no thanks! Sean Condon, dairy farmer and supplier, delivers organic raw milk to 'The Urban Co-op' while with Anne Maher, director, looks on.



• The UCC students are studying for a Masters in Science with a focus on co-ops, agri-food and sustainability. More details: <http://bit.ly/UCCmscCo-opsAgri>



• ABOVE: "Coming together as conscious consumers to support the health, wellness and economic security of our community and planet".

• RIGHT: Chenpu, a masters student of co-operatives, agri-food and sustainability at UCC, was very taken by Irish beliefs around Robin Red Breasts. He bought this painting in 'The Urban Co-op'.

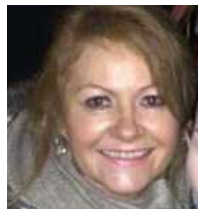


OPEN DAY: From Befrienders to Ballyn

SANTRY

North Dublin showcases its

BY ADRIANNE MURPHY



Recently, I had the pleasure of attending a Seminar on Social Inclusion, run by the Dublin North West

Area Partnership (DNWAP) in the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Santry on the northside of Dublin.

I've been to many seminars over the years, but none quite as uplifting as this one. This was a completely different experience. There was a positivity in the room, which I felt the minute I walked in and, dare I say it, a sense of inclusiveness and comradeship, which seemed quite apt for a Community Social Inclusion Seminar. In keeping with this inclusive theme, they even had signers signing everything spoken throughout the day.

Dublin Lord Mayor, Paul McAuliffe, opened the seminar and congratulated the people and projects we were there to celebrate.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Keynote speaker, Senator Lynn Ruane, was introduced by DNWAP board member, Tommy Simpson.

With Senator Ruane, you can expect straight talk and empowering words, and she didn't let us down. She spoke about powerful women in communities, about warriors who fought and are fighting for human rights and inclusion at all levels in society. She spoke of community

spirit and togetherness, of people having empathy for others less fortunate and of trying to combat exclusion in all walks of life by coming together to effect changes in legislation.

She spoke of passion and connection and of people working together to bring about a will for change and inclusivity within all communities throughout Ireland by putting that passion and connection into everything we do.

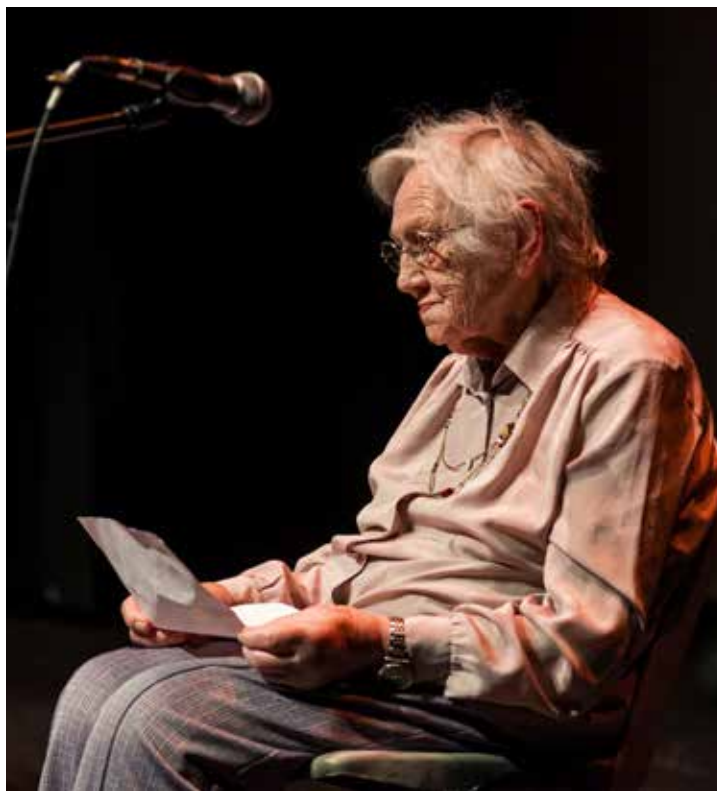
By the time she had finished speaking I was fired up with this passion she spoke about and, going by the tremendous applause she received, I think the whole room was too. I had a smile on my face and a warm fuzzy feeling. That was the first of many smiles, and warm fuzzy feelings, I was to have throughout the day.

FUNDING

Mary Corridan, community development manager with the DNWAP was next up to the podium. She explained all about the social inclusion fund and how community groups should apply for this funding. Then we heard presentations from some of the successful projects that had received funding from the Partnership in 2019.

First up was Anne Devoy Kelly, co-ordinator of Befrienders Dublin (<http://befriendersdublin.com>) which was set up as a service for people experiencing mental health issues and loneliness. They back the campaign for a 24/7 mental health service (www.mentalhealthreform.ie): For most people suffering with mental health issues, the services open to them during the week are

"There was a positivity in the room, which I felt the minute I walked in, and a sense of inclusiveness and comradeship, which seemed apt for a Community Social Inclusion seminar."



• On the day, Ann Borrowman (99) read from the story 'Larry the Lizard'.

closed at weekends and they can suffer isolation and loneliness.

Befrienders Dublin set up a photography course so participants could make friends while learning a new skill. We saw their photographs on display and heard participants tell

(in a video) of the positive effects the course had on them. It was heart-warming to see how something so simple could have such benefits for their mental health. They all seemed so happy and all it took was funding for a camera, tutor and lunch.



Ballymun farmers projects

INTERGENERATIONAL

Rachel Duff, manager of Mellow Springs Childcare told us about Together Old and Young (TOY) which is an intergenerational project run by her organisation in conjunction with Odins Wood Day Care Centre for the elderly. Once again a simple idea, for very little outlay, with amazing health benefits for all participants.

It involved bringing the children from Mellow Springs on trips down to the local active retirement group at the Day Care Centre. We heard lovely stories of the children meeting their adoptive grannies and grandads and asking to go back. (Indepth report: <https://www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/TogetherOldYoung.pdf>)

We then had presenters from the University of Third Age (U3A) which encourages retired people to engage in social, cultural and civic activities to alleviate isolation and contributing towards their wellbeing.

With the support of the Evolving for Equality grant, some of the group members participated in a creative writing project called 'When I Grow Up'. They published a booklet of their stories and poetry and performed their work live on stage in the Axis Theatre.

We were also treated to some performances to a reading of 'Larry the Lizard' by the fabulous Ann Borrowman who is 99 years young.

Mary Carroll and Sinead Carolan told us about the 'Creative Cabra' project where young people explored the theme of Cabra 'Then and Now' and interpreted this theme through drama, music, art and film.

BALLYMUN FARM

And we were enthralled to hear from Stephen Hayden who is involved in the City Farm Ballymun project which is promised funding this year.

It was uplifting and inspiring to see such wonderful community projects with great health benefits for everyone in the community. These projects are led by ordinary people making a big difference in the lives of many.

And these were just a handful of the projects assisted by the Partnership via the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme.

I left with a smile on my face and a pep in my step, thinking that by having such kind, selfless people in our communities attempting to combat exclusion and bring a little joy to the lives of others, perhaps there might be hope for us all yet.

Dublin North West Area Partnership

Dublin North West Area Partnership (DNWAP) can lend support if are an already established community group or are wishing to set one up. If you are in the Dublin North West catchment area, then see how they can help you. They run various programmes, which cover training and funding.

DNWAP is one of 49 Local Development Companies (aka Partnerships) around the country. See opposite.

W: www.dnwap.ie

Near FM

Adrianne Murphy volunteers as a producer and presenter with Near FM which broadcasts 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

It is a communally-owned, not-for-profit radio station that was set up in 1995.

It is a member of Craol, the national network of community radio stations.

We look forward to more reports from Adrianne and her colleagues.

W: <http://nearfm.ie>



Irish Local Development Network

NEW CHAIRPERSON

Jim Finn (pictured right) from Ballinahow, Co. Tipperary, has been appointed chairperson of the Irish Local Development Network, the representative body for the country's 49 Local Development Companies.

In a voluntary capacity, Jim already serves as chairperson of North Tipperary Development Company and broadcasts extensively on community and rural affairs for Tipp FM. He takes over from Marie Price Bolger who led the network from 2015.

The country's Local Development Companies deliver social and community supports services such as LEADER, Local Employment Services, the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme, Tús, the Rural Social Scheme, social enterprise supports and a range of other community and rural development programmes.

On becoming chair, Jim said, "there have been many positive, recent policy developments such as the publication of a national Social Enterprise Policy and the new 5-year Strategy for the Community and Voluntary Sector. But, many of our communities and disadvantaged groups are still reeling from the impact of disproportionate cuts over the past decade."

His key priorities for the sector include securing:

- An increase in social inclusion funding,
- Protection and extension of community-based employment services,
- Adequate resourcing and simplified design of rural funds, eg LEADER.

He said the "bottom-up community engagement approach of Local Development Companies" was particularly suited to the climate action challenge.

He called for "consistent core-funding" for Local Development Companies who are "the primary delivery agent of much of the state's response to unemployment and social exclusion".

"I am also particularly conscious that our companies are governed by volunteer-led boards and I look forward to the full implementation of the 'Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities' strategy with appropriate supports for the voluntary, bottom-up approach that is so vital for our communities."

Regarding the ILDNs value, Jim said it was the largest network of companies in the State for community development and anti-poverty work: "We have over 2,100 employees and 9,500 Tús & RSS workers on the ground supporting over 15,000 community groups and 173,000 individuals annually through €300+ million of state-funded programmes."

PREDECESSOR, MARIE PRICE-BOLGER



He paid tribute to his predecessor Marie Price-Bolger (left): "She led the network through a period of very significant funding and policy challenges. She served the organisation and the sector with great dedication, energy and fairness."

Marie made a speech last year calling on the Government to look beyond private sector suppliers, stressing that it is volunteers who make communities work. She said, "Our sector consistently provides services on behalf of government departments in an efficient, effective and value for money model that cannot be matched by any private sector programme."

Directly addressing Minister for Rural and Community Development Michael Ring, who was in attendance, Price-Bolger asked him to bring to cabinet concerns about the

privatisation of community work.*

* Our 2019 report: <https://www.changingireland.ie/volunteers-make-communities-work-sdcp-ildn-price-bolger/>

LAUNCH

Mayo migrants produce info videos

- Project devised to provide signposts towards integration

Migrants and community workers on February 12th launched four short, information films about accessing services in Mayo.

The project was overseen by South West Mayo Development (SWMD) and Mayo Intercultural Action*.

At the launch, Irish volunteers and migrants praised the levels of support for integration in Mayo. However, the needs are increasing.

It was pointed out that Ireland is ahead of other countries in providing supports for integration.

Daniel Kabongo told of how friends in other European countries rang him asking for advice, because they knew the supports here were better. He received calls from Germany for instance, as well as from other counties in Ireland.

The video project was funded by the European Commission under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) 2014-2020 and was supported by the Department of Justice and Equality. AMIF provides 75% funding, with local matched funds of 25% provided by Mayo County

Council, Tusla and the HSE.

A migrant, Ela Gizicka, who has been here some years, wished for more integration supports that would include migrants from the EU.

She was high in her praise of South West Mayo Development (SWMD): "They do absolutely amazing work. They are very busy," she said.

South West Mayo has four full-time workers who support vulnerable migrants "and that doesn't include all the work we do in SICAP – 22% of our caseload is from new communities," said Maria McHale, social inclusion co-ordinator.

"There has never been more support for vulnerable migrants. However, demand is growing and people are presenting with extremely complex problems, trying to get basic needs met," she said.

However, Ela wanted to see more happening. She recalled when she and other EU migrants "celebrated the seasons and festivals, and International Women's Day. We did crafts, singing and poetry."

"We still love to meet together," said Ela. She

was concerned that newcomers from the EU weren't getting the same integration supports that she had.

"People who are here years (know the score) and know the organisations to go to, but new migrants do not," she said. "We need more community work to encourage more integration (for EU migrants)."

As Gerry O'Neill, CEO of SWMD, pointed out, "AMIF does not support EU migrants and this is a gap, as is the fact that if AMIF clients gain citizenship, they are no longer eligible for supports, even though they may still be very vulnerable."

On the videos, Maria said, "The films are not gritty documentaries. They are not step-by-step guides – are pointers, signposts if you will."

Mayo Intercultural Action was an integral part of this project's success. It has campaigned for an "open, just and equal Ireland" since 2004 and four years ago it merged with SWMD.

The videos are online at:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/southwestmayo/>

Unpacking a 7-minute video for migrants

The seven-minute film 'Essentials for Migrants' begins with a man walking down to the edge of Lough Lannagh in Castlebar, Co. Mayo.

The camera moves from his feet up and we see Daniel Kabongo, a migrant, from the Democratic Republic of Congo, ready to give his views on his "two most important things". They are the Irish Residence card and the Personal Public Service (PPS) number.

He goes on to explain in brief why these are important and where to get them. For example, with both, Daniel can now vote in local elections.

Tomas Lally, development manager with South Connaught Citizens

Information Service goes into more detail - saying that the PPS number is for "social welfare payments, paying your taxes and paying your national insurance". People born in Ireland receive one automatically.

Newcomers must apply and Tomas explained where to go in Mayo (the Intreo office in Castlebar) and to bring proof of ID, proof of your address and confirmation as to why you need the PPS number, for example a letter from an employer because you've found work.

The video points people towards local supports and the national website: www.citizeninformation.ie

Daniel said one of the benefits of

getting the PPS number was that it "allowed me to get my driving license, healthcare, back to school and housing. That's why you (should not) wait - go and get your PPS card. The fact is sometimes we get lazy (and) we think that things are difficult."

A Garda immigration officer, Declan Sweeney, explained what is involved in applying for an Irish Residence card: "If you don't have a valid residence card it will affect your citizenship here in Ireland."

Essentials for Migrants:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XfTSSo-MVAA>



* At the launch in Castlebar: The videos were produced with input and experience and participation on migrants who received support from South West Mayo Development and Mayo Intercultural Action. Frontline staff in local services also appear in the films.

Uh, oh! No, I didn't like all the videos - Not my Mayo!

By Allen Meagher

At a well-attended launch in a fabulous venue, of four films produced by migrant support groups in Mayo, I liked three of the productions, but one fell flat for me.

The volunteers taking part in the films put in a sterling effort, but one movie irritated me in the way it portrayed Mayo and Ireland. It wasn't my style. Not 'My Mayo!', but that's what it was called!

'My Mayo' was produced by South West Mayo Development Company and Mayo Intercultural Action.

The first attendee at the launch who I approached happened to agree, quietly, with me.

"It was obviously well-intentioned, but playing devil's advocate, the 'My Mayo' film was too glossy, too slick, for me," I said.

"Oh, thank god! I thought it was only me. I was thinking the same," she replied.

For me, the 'My Mayo' video gave an impression to people thinking of emigrating from poor countries that by coming here you could get a car, a house and cash on arrival - no problem. We know it isn't like that.

Daniel (recently arrived from DRC) is seen in the video walking through a museum exhibition saying 'My History'.

My confidante also thought that was odd, though there was a rationale.

Either way, she did not wish to be quoted being critical. Everyone gave their utmost to the four productions.

"We all know each other too well, but you can say I didn't like it. It was too glossy. Just don't name me."

Communities often get a bad rap from the mainstream media and their successes are often overlooked. 'Changing Ireland' highlights positives and rightly so. However, when reviewing films, we reserve the right to be critical.

Remember, however, that three of the four videos were informative, useful and inspiring. One, for example, featured migrants talking about the value of volunteering while in the midst of helping people.

The overall project is fantastic and was deservedly praised highly on the day. It is believed to be a first among local development companies - producing videos for Youtube with informational messages for a specific target group, migrants.

But my reaction to that one video was overwhelming. I approached one of the project leaders and said how

Daniel, Esther and others in the films were brilliant, but that the 'My Mayo' video was far too stylised for my liking.

Maria McHale from South West Mayo Development strongly defended it. The 'My History' part was filmed in the Irish Museum of Country Life, a venue outside Castlebar that regularly welcomes asylum-seekers and refugees for project activities.

"When Daniel walks through the museum and says 'My History', it's because the museum has worked to ensure that people from all cultures are included in the museum's programme of activities. It's not 'odd' when you understand the context," said Maria.

The film locations were places people should go to progress in building a new life. She explained the rationale behind the project, the pressure to get everyone involved together at the same time and the time pressures on the camera operator who was only available for a few days.

She and her colleagues are rightly proud to have tried a new way to get information out and stir debate.

A civil servant listening also saw it differently: "They've produced a video that will get people talking. Look, it's already working! It's the style that makes it work. It's informative which it's meant to be," said Paul Geraghty.

I took their points, but still didn't like it. Not the Mayo I know. Zero rain, or trees bent by wind, or litter or dilapidated old buildings and shut-up shops (drive through Claremorris). No housing issues, nor any hassle getting insurance to drive a car. Dreamland Mayo.

But I recommend you watch all four and make up your own mind.

I am certain that community workers will get value from it. The four films combined will, when for instance shown in group settings, provoke worthwhile discussions in any county. And the project leaders knew this when they were planning the project.

These films could spur others to shoot similar - or different! - films in their areas. The more we talk the more we learn and the more we integrate.

Highlighting services that people don't know enough about is great. Now, with coronavirus, getting the message out online as South West Mayo has done becomes even more important than before.



• Bianca Doufene, Paul Geraghty, Department of Rural and Community Development, and Ela Gizicka.



• Maria McHale, South West Mayo Development and Lisa Keveney and Joe Syron from the Department of Rural and Community Development.



• Ela Gizicka, Patricia Quinn, Bianca Doufene, Esther and Daniel Kabongo and daughter Ariel.



Treasure our peace

Don Mullan, eye-witness (age 15) t

Don Mullan grew up to become a noted author, film-maker, human rights activist and social justice campaigner.

His path was set when as a teenage civil rights activist, in Derry, in 1972, he was shot at during the Bloody Sunday massacre by British soldiers.

Neighbours joined the IRA afterwards and while he did not, he knows why they did. He felt his heart harden, but also saw beyond the uniforms and took a peaceful path towards social justice. Years later, his writings on Bloody Sunday led to the setting up of a new enquiry by the British government that led to an historic apology from the British prime minister.

Last year, Don spoke at an event in Straide's Michael Davitt Museum, Co. Mayo. He was brought to tears telling the story of what happened that fateful day and in the aftermath.

At a time when peace is under stress, it is worth remembering the horrors we have left behind. When an eyewitness gives testimony, the experience sinks in. Here is Don's account as given to the audience in Straide:

That day had a very profound impact on me. It was my first civil rights march. I was 15 years of age. None of us saw the valley of tears we were walking into.

At first when the paratroopers walked in I thought it was a snatch squad, where they army would come in at very high speed, take some prisoners, turn around and drive out again. The way you dealt with that was by throwing stones and I remember going back to the rubble barricade to throw stones.

Suddenly the shooting began. The most vivid memory I have to this day is the sound – not of bullets – but of Michael Kelly (aged 17) two-and-a-half feet to my left going “uggh” and he fell at my feet. There are two photos that were taken – one showing me cowering looking in the directions the shots came from. There's a second photo – and I don't remember this – but I've clearly moved around to help Michael – and then I remember other people falling to my right. And suddenly the wall burst above my head when a bullet hit it. It was like a firecracker as bits of mortar and brick exploded. At that point I began to run.

The last thing I remember was someone saying, “Get down, get down! They're firing live ammunition.” And I've no memory after that – there are three minutes of that day I have never been able to recover the memory of. Until

I could never remember the rest – until a half mile away a woman's voice called me back to reality. She said, “Son, what's happening?” I was on Beechwood Avenue running home. I said, ‘Missus there must be at least six people dead’. I don't know why I said that. She thought I was exaggerating and I didn't stop to convince her.

That night we realised there were not six, but thirteen people shot dead and another thirteen had been wounded, some of them very seriously.

What really made Bloody Sunday worse was the cover-up. The British understood the power of the first soundbite. Within minutes of the operation happening they were telling the media (lies) – that as they moved in, they came under a fuselage of bombs and bullets, that the army had fired back and targeted gunmen and bombers and that some of those who were hit were on the army's wanted list. Which was utter lies.



• Don Mullan (front, centre) on Bloody Sunday. Our video of Don telling his story and speaking about the connections between Michael Davitt and Mahatma Gandhi can be viewed on 'Changing Ireland's Youtube channel.

“If, at that moment, I had a gun I would have blown his brains out. They walked off laughing, not realising the dangerous game they were playing. I felt I had been violated... (Later) I saw beyond the uniform... It didn't end there.”

And that was repeated by the British Consulate in New York the next day.

Next day, I remember going down and six bullets fired into a window where an Italian photographer (was standing) trying to photograph what was happening. (There's actually a sound recording taken from within the room as the bullets came in).

I found our blue and white civil rights banner, now very heavily bloodstained. On top of it was a brick. And on top of that was an open matchbox with a human eyelid and eyelashes – that belonged to Barney McGuigan – I still think of him as ‘the old man of Bloody Sunday’, because I can only think of him as a 15 year old boy. And here I am now a man of 63.

Barney could hear Paddy Doherty who was dying out in front of the Rossville Flats – and he was calling across to Barney and others ... “Please help me, I'm dying” Barney tried to... but still Paddy kept calling ... “Don't let me die alone.”

And eventually Barney couldn't take any more and he took out his handkerchief and walked (with it held high) to show he was no threat to anyone.

But Soldier F, who'd already murdered at least three people and wounded others, saw him and got down on one knee, took him in his sight, and the bullet went in through the back of Barney's head under his left ear and came out by his right eye.

When Barney fell his head ran like an open tap. And that's what my civil rights banner was used to cover.

Last year, I visited the national Gandhi museum in New Delhi and something happened. The curator said he'd never seen it happen before. And I hadn't been expecting it.

I was short on time and I wanted to visit the place where Gandhi was assassinated. The Curator brought me on a quick tour first and he brought me to see the clothing Gandhi was wearing on the 30th of January, 1948 – same date as Bloody Sunday. The loincloth and shawl were heavily bloodstained. It immediately brought me back to Bloody Sunday and I wept. I wept with the realisation that we can be very cruel as people.

One day, a friend said they were taking statements and said, “I think you should go and give a statement” and I did. Years later, that would become the brick that would begin to make the whole cover-up tumble. Hundreds of our community came forward to help the public enquiry the British set up.

Teachers and doctors took our statements, typed them up and gave them to the Widgery Tribunal. We discovered Widgery didn't even bother to read them.

Three months later, the Widgery Tribunal came out, in April, 1972. And what happened? He found, as Bishop Edward Daly said, the innocent guilty and the guilty innocent.

Later that year, as part of the cover-up – and this was like throwing salt in open wounds – Queen Elizabeth II decorated the commander of the first battalion of the parachute regiment.

What did that tell us about the value of Irish lives?

They didn't realise, but they had handed the initiative over to the men of violence. They effectively killed the non-violent civil rights movement. It took another quarter of a century again before people could come together again to

QUARTER OF YOUTHS DON'T KNOW IF THEY SUPPORT GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT

According to a recent survey of voters in the ROI, a quarter of 18-24 year olds said they “didn't know” if they supported the Good Friday Agreement. This compared to 98% support among over-65s.

The survey was carried out on behalf of Belfast-based media group, ‘The Detail’ and published in February.

to Bloody Sunday

resolve their disputes and disagreements in a peaceful way.

Eamon McCann made the point that it was logical for the many young men and women who then decided to join the IRA. They realised there was no such thing such as British justice.

I saw many of my friends make that choice. And that choice was open to me, but I didn't make it. I don't say that in any way that's meant to be condemnatory, because I understand that choice.

Creggan had been a no-go area, but now we were under military control and one day Grenadier guards came down our street, came over to us and asked for identification. I had a little football club card into which I'd pasted a passport sized photograph and I thought it made me look suitably impressive.

I produced this and the head of the foot patrol looked at it, looked at me and laughed. Then he passed it around to the other soldiers and they laughed. I was 16 years old and very sensitive. I suffered from acne. And these guys were humiliating me in front of my friends.

As the moment went on, I became very frightened. I realised I was no longer frightened of the soldiers, but of what was happening inside of me, because what he did was put me in touch with the killer instinct. If, at that moment, I had a gun I would have blown his brains out. I know I would have done it.

And they walked off laughing, not realising the dangerous game they were playing.

I felt I had been violated. It was almost like being raped in a sense.

For three days I couldn't trust myself to go out of the house, until I exorcised these terrible feelings out of my system.

And these things were happening all the time.

Another day, I was at 12 o'clock mass and there was a huge explosion nearby and you could feel the shockwaves coming through the congregation. The bomb had gone off on my street. I went down through the crowd... as I looked through I could see the tattered remnants of a little boy's cowboy suit hanging from a tree.

It was nine-years old Gordon Gallagher - he'd gone out to play with his younger sister. Unknown to them, a landmine had been planted in the back garden (to ambush a 'duck squad').

Nobody had warned the family and Gordon died in my next-door neighbour Tommy Morrisson's arms. Within weeks the family left the street.

After Bloody Sunday, imagine the anger we felt as a community and the resentment we felt towards the British army on our streets and raiding our homes.

One day, the British army came in very quickly and I was caught inside their net, so I couldn't riot against them. I was watching the raid go on.

Close by, there were some landrovers. There was a (soldier) who was maybe 35. I always remember - don't know if you have the BBC here - but before the 6 o'clock news there was a ... Zepedy mustache.

So I picked on him and there were two teenage girls on my right. I made comments about how he looked and every time the girls would laugh I got more vicious. It encouraged me to continue.

I kept this up relentlessly for 10 or 15 minutes and then one of the girls said, "Jesus, he's crying" and the tears were running down his cheeks.

If he had come and hit me I could have dealt with it.

I as a boy had made a man cry. I just walked away. I went to my bedroom and felt ashamed of myself. I saw beyond the uniform, I saw the human being.

It didn't end there. I was studying A-level art and (coming home) one day past the soldiers in the sanger ... I was just about to pass when I



• Don Mullan speaking in The Davitt Museum, Straide, Co. Mayo, on the 150th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth (see winter edition for more). The museum's development has been given support through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme.

heard from behind: 'Hey Mate'. I thought it was looking for identification. I turned around and when I looked I remember thinking "Oh, shit", because it was the soldier with the zepedy moustache and here I was now in his territory and he had me under control.

If it was me, I'd have dragged him into the sanger and given him a hiding.

He held my gaze for 10 - 15 seconds and the next thing he gave me the most beautiful smile and he waved, telling me go. I turned around and I was gone.

But I knew exactly what that man was saying to me: "I understand your hatred towards me and I want you to know that I don't have any hatred towards you and I don't want to be here."

I'm not ashamed to admit that I prayed he got home safely to his family. I would love to meet him to this day.

I had all of these experiences, but I also realised there were systemic injustices in the world that need to be confronted in a real way. The question was how would one go about it.

That's when my journey began.

- Video, pics & transcription by Allen Meagher



• Don Mullan sheds a tear while speaking in The Davitt Museum. His groundbreaking book 'Eyewitness Bloody Sunday' was published in 1997. Find out more about Don's work at: donmullan.org

Coronavirus COVID-19



Coronavirus
COVID-19
Public Health
Advice

The Facts

Most at Risk

- Anyone who has been to an affected region in the last 14 days **AND** is experiencing symptoms
- Anyone who has been in close contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) in the last 14 days **AND** is experiencing symptoms

Prevention



Wash

your hands well and often to avoid contamination



Cover

your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing and discard used tissue



Avoid

touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands



Clean

and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces

Symptoms

> A Cough > Shortness of Breath > Breathing Difficulties > Fever (High Temperature)

Affected Regions

Check the list of affected regions on www.hse.ie

What to do if you are at risk

I've been to an affected region in the last 14 days and

I HAVE symptoms

1. Stay away from other people
2. Phone your GP without delay
3. If you do not have a GP
Phone 112 or 999

I DO NOT HAVE symptoms

For advice visit www.hse.ie

I've been in close contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) in the last 14 days and

I HAVE symptoms

1. Stay away from other people
2. Phone your GP without delay
3. If you do not have a GP
Phone 112 or 999

I DO NOT HAVE symptoms

For advice visit www.hse.ie

For Daily Updates Visit

www.gov.ie/health-covid-19
www.hse.ie