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WAR CRIMES NOT ETHICAL DILEMMA

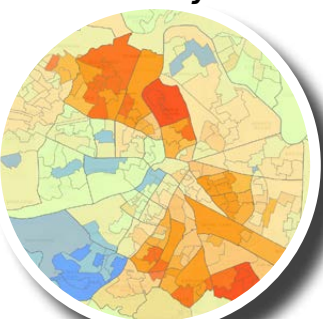
Bernadette McAliskey
addresses shame of
choosing career over
protesting



• Pages 12-13

RICH-POOR GAP WIDENS

• Pobal poverty index
reveals other side to
Irish economy



• Page 10

LEITRIM'S NO KILL POLICY

• Government invests
in dog pounds, while
scanning lost pets a
win-win for everyone



• Pages 20-21

Grassroots community workers say The State did not listen to us

• Pages 6-9



TRAVELLER-BUILT ACCOMMODATION NOW A REALITY

• Pages 18-19



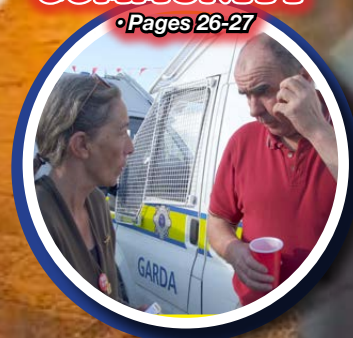
COMMUNITY RADIO LOOKS TO THE FUTURE

• Pages 16-17



CLIMATE CHANGE & COMMUNITY

• Pages 26-27



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UNIQUE AGENCY POBAL IS
30 YEARS OLD



ISSUE 81 - SUMMER 2023:
WHY COMMUNITIES LOVE
SUMMER



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INDEPENDENT

'Changing Ireland' is an independent, community-based, 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 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 5 for information about the team behind 'Changing Ireland'.

SUPPORT

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



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CONTENTS

5-9 - DUBLIN TROUBLES

Community organisations and their staff call for action

10 - MAP SHOWS RICH-POOR GAP WIDENING

Pobal conference

11 - GOOD READS

Start 2024 with a book from your favourite community worker



12 - BERNADETTE MCALISKEY

If you're afraid to speak out now, you will fail your community



13 - IRISH CIVIL SOCIETY

200 groups call for peace in Gaza

14-15 - ROMA WOMEN'S HEALTH

Pavee Point play crucial role

16-17 - COMMUNITY RADIO IN IRELAND

Concerns over future funding

18-19-CENA HOUSING

Stylish outdoorsy Traveller-built accommodation emerges



19 - MEN'S SHEDS

€1m funding boost

20 - FEMICIDE

Women's Aid calls for zero tolerance

20-21 - ANIMAL WELFARE IN THE COMMUNITY

Leitrim loves its pets / New laws

22 - DARNDALE/ DROGHEDA

New respect between residents and Gardaí

23 - SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

OECD at 5th national conference

24-25 - PRIDE OF PLACE

2023 winners / What's happening in Lisdoonvarna?

26-27 - CLIMATE & COMMUNITIES

Siobhán Mehigan from Wicklow reports on a recent gathering

28-29 - VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

Community-State civic forum becomes an annual event



30-31 CORKONIANS HOPE TO COMPETE FOR NATIONAL TITLE IN 2024

Not just in hurling.

31 - HORACE ON HOLIDAYS

Exclusive report from Cop 28.

32 - LOCAL AUTHORITY NEWS

READERSHIP SURVEY

- The Changing Ireland Readership Survey was carried out last year using Survey Monkey.
- Over 700 people were contacted by email and provided with the survey link.
- The survey had a 17% response rate.
- All survey entries were given anonymously and the results were independently collated.

82% agree: Changing Ireland brings to my attention issues and groups of which I was not aware.



54% agree: "Changing Ireland really makes me think and affects how I work."





Dublin's community workers want to be heard

DUBLIN RIOTS NOT A SURPRISE

Community development workers in Dublin's inner city were shocked, saddened, scared, yet ultimately unsurprised at the events that unfolded in the capital on November 17.

Dublin City Community Co-op says its 13 member organisations were not listened to. Staff are angry, determined, and also fearful of the higher probability now of racist attacks, including on community workers.

Their work is largely funded through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme and we publish their long-form accounts of what occurred and how life has changed for all in Dublin's inner city. This time they want to be heard.

FROM THE RIVER TO THE SEA

From the river to the sea are six words now laden with

bias, according to the Israeli government. If manufactured dismay distracts anyone from Israel's genocidal attacks on Gaza, they should read Bernadette McAliskey's interview on page 12.

BROADCASTERS WITH ATTITUDE

Community radio station staff and volunteers around the country would make RTÉ presenters blush. I thought of them when Ryan Tubridy and senior management at the national broadcaster were being questioned by the Dáil Public Accounts Committee and the Oireachtas Media Committee.

RTÉ managers referred to their top earners as "the talent". Now it's a dirty word and RTÉ is struggling. However, so too is community radio and for small money it could be elevated.

Shockingly, I met community radio station managers at the annual Craol awards who are on more or less the same wages as Tubridy's cat. One manager of a long-established and successful

station told me he takes home around €33,000 per annum - the same as when he started 20 years ago. The station he manages is a roaring success in the non-profit world of inclusivity, diversity and kindness that marks out community radio as special.

It is deeply unfair to pay people a pittance just because they love their work. We have to learn to value community development, social inclusion and engagement with hard-to-reach people - or its polar opposites of hate and division will flourish.

PAVEE POINT

Kathy Masterson's news feature on Roma women shows that Pavee Point is absolutely proving its worth. The organisation has a national remit and without it we probably would not know of the challenges facing Roma women when pregnant. Many Roma mothers-to-be show up for the first time at health facilities after they have gone into labour.

INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT

Speaking of inclusive engagement, the Aviva Stadium was the setting for a day of frank discussions on how best the Community and Voluntary Sector and the State could collaborate and co-create policy. An unexpected lesson from one keynote speaker was that people in powerful positions should smile more often. Find out why on pages 28-29.

HORACE IN DUBAI

Finally, I was delighted to see that our own Horace McDermott, who has been providing readers with top insights for decades, got to stay in the Burj Khalifa. All courtesy of the UN. Read his exclusive account on page 31.

Allen Meagher

FILE A REPORT FOR US!

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



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Thanks To . . . 'Changing Ireland' thanks everyone involved in the production of Issue 83.

Front Cover - main photo: A screengrab of television footage by Sky News of the Dublin riots.

Correction: A headline on page 2, Issue 82, read "First houses in 20 years in Moyross". It should have read "First houses in over 20 years in Delmege, Moyross". Houses have been built in recent years in other parts of Moyross.

**MADE IN
MOYROSS
LIMERICK**

DISCLAIMER

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

Groups call for resources and insist rioters and looters don't define communities

BY KATHY MASTERSON

Organisations based in Dublin city and those working on the frontline with the communities most affected by the events of November 23 were united in expressing support for the victims of the stabbing attack on Parnell Street.

They also universally condemned the racist views expressed by many of the mob in the riots that followed later that day. Some noted the underlying issues behind the behaviour seen on the capital's streets that night – 'marginalised' and 'disenfranchised' were how the (mostly) young men were described by two organisations based in Dublin's North Inner City.

Other groups were at pains to point out that the rioters and looters do not represent their communities.

A call was also made for greater resources to be directed towards providing support for those at risk of falling through the cracks.

Jim Gavin, independent chair of the North East Inner City (NEIC) Programme Implementation Board said the events "do not reflect the



• Marchers at the Ireland for All rally held in Dublin earlier this year.

PHOTO BY A. MEAGHER

community of the north east inner city who are working tirelessly with businesses, Dublin City Council, government departments and agencies to make their home an attractive and vibrant living and working environment for the community and its families".

Youth Work Ireland, whose head office is located on Dominick Street in Dublin 1, stated: "When the dust

has settled, we will still need to work at the frontline with marginalised young people in local communities to address how distant many have become from the mainstream."

Caroline Gardner, CEO of Quality Matters, based in Mountjoy Square, pointed out: "A small group of fascist-leaning individuals are preying on young, disenfranchised people, who are looking for a place to

vent their anger at a feeling of a lack of opportunities. The solution has to be twofold: taking a firm approach to hate speech and organising, and then putting resources around young people who are falling out of school and work, or people coming out of prison, mental health services or rehabilitation. We have many great examples of what works, state investment is what is missing."

She added: "While some of our employees from a refugee background are currently scared about coming to work, we also know that, in a few years, we may welcome some of the lads who were involved in the riots.

"Integration needs to happen at the community level, it needs to happen by giving people opportunities and bringing people from different backgrounds together in a common cause.

"There are innovative solutions out there, social enterprise is providing a good few of them, and additional investment in these models will save money in the short as well as long term," she concluded.

Prayers for children, solidarity after hateful riots

• Statements issued by Dublin-based civil society groups •

New Communities Partnership (NCP): Our thoughts continue to be with the children and their carer. We wish them well and pray for their speedy recovery.

We also commend the bravery of those who intervened and risked their lives to save others.

In the aftermath of the riots, hateful language was freely used online, including under NCP's social media posts. We know that many people in our community are feeling scared and unsafe but we would like to let you know that we are here for you.

New Communities Partnership stands against violence, hate crime and racism of any kind. Hate towards one of us is hate towards all of us.

Dublin South City Partnership: We stand in solidarity with the children and their carer who were attacked. We stand in solidarity with our staff members who are afraid.

We stand in solidarity with our communities, whether born and reared here, or who come from farther afield.



• Solidarity on display at the Ireland for All rally in Dublin earlier this year.

PHOTO BY A. MEAGHER

Ballyfermot Chapelized Partnership: We have a zero-tolerance policy towards racism in any form. We are committed to equity, inclusion and welcome for all.

We as an organisation stand in solidarity with our colleagues and

community who are personally affected by this and rocked by the intolerance shown in a city which we are collectively invested in making the best possible place to live and work.

St Vincent De Paul Ireland:

Our prayers and thoughts are with the children and carer who were attacked, as well as their families. The Society of St Vincent DePaul has been offering our full solidarity and support to all people in Ireland for many years and will continue to stand with all nationalities and communities in Ireland.

Comhlámh: Our thoughts and deepest sympathies go out to the victims of the stabbing attack, their families and friends as well as the entire Gaelscoil Choláiste Mhuire community. We extend our heartfelt wishes for a swift recovery, both emotionally and physically, during this challenging time.

All of Comhlámh's community were horrified to see the subsequent riots, looting, and devastation. We strongly condemn these acts of violence, and the incitement to hatred of those involved. Such actions only serve to deepen divisions within our beautiful city and country, and this is not the Ireland we want and love.

DUBLIN - RAGE, DESPAIR AND HOPE

NOEL WARDICK SAYS STAFF "PROFOUNDLY AFFECTED"

Dublin City Community Co-operative is an alliance of 13 grassroots community development organisations that came together in 2014. The groups work across the whole inner city - north-east, north-west, south-east and south-west.

All 13 groups are partially funded by the national Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) and by a range of other statutory and non-statutory funders.

Co-op CEO, Noel Wardick, called on staff to give their views on the horrific events that unfolded in Dublin City Centre on November 23. The views of ten staff from projects that are co-op members are reproduced over the following pages, lightly edited for length.

Noel commented:

"The heinous stabbing of three young children and their childcare worker was an exhibition of violence unmatched in its degree of depravity. The perpetration of this senseless crime outside Gaelscoil Colaiste Mhuire on Parnell Street, an anchor of this inner-city community, in broad daylight, shattered realities, and senses of safety for those of the community. This unthinkable event was followed by the descent of the capital city into disorder and chaos, with anti-immigrant sentiment and racism pervading the riots that seized the streets.

"People have been profoundly affected by the abhorrent attack and subsequent riots.

"While O'Connell Street and the surrounding area is just the epicentre of the capital city for many people, to others it is home.

"We need to hear the heartbreak experienced by residents of the inner city where the most barbaric and unjust violation of safety saw innocent children and their childcare worker stabbed. The rest of the community was traumatised by the event. We need to hear their pain at this horrific attack being overshadowed by the riots that followed, and the subsequent marring of their communities by the media at a time when they desperately needed national solidarity and understanding.

"Many migrants in Ireland, friends, family, colleagues, and neighbours, no longer feel



"At the risk of sounding alarmist, the riots that were seen could become themselves a warning for increasing polarisation, radicalisation, disorder, and violence if we fail to change course."

welcome or safe here in their home. It is critical that space is made to listen to these people, because too often it is the voices of those least affected that are heard the most, drowning out insights that could build understanding.

"The State didn't listen to those at the grassroots. The State alienated itself from the world it supposedly makes policies to protect, to the detriment of those who tried to warn them. They felt the tensions and enmity within the inner city become progressively palpable over the last year. The protests at direct provision sites and refugee accommodation sites were... indications of what was to come if the issues underlying them were left unaddressed.

"Ireland has seen an increase in poverty, deprivation, and inequality in the last year. The housing and homelessness crisis, the

pandemic, the lack of affordable and accessible childcare, mental health services and GPs, the cost-of-living crisis and related food and fuel poverty have ravaged disadvantaged communities and households in the inner city.

"As disproportionate numbers of international protection applicants and refugees were placed in direct provision accommodation sites across the inner city, some feared that existing social issues and already stretched services would be put under increasing pressure. These social issues were not resolved, and genuine concerns were left unaddressed by the State.

"It is crucial to State that participation in the riots, in the looting, the racism, and the violence is utterly inexcusable. Analysis of how it was triggered is necessary.

"The far right has taken

unaddressed concerns and hardships as an opportunity to gain support for their racist ideology. They framed the social and economic issues as resulting from migration, igniting fear over resource scarcity, and invoking conceptions of an in-group threatened by an out-group.

"The far right did not by any means capture the minds of most residing in the inner city nor do they represent the views of the people therein. However, it is crucial to understand that the government's failure to overcome the country's social problems has provided fertile grounds for the far right to grow their abhorrent ideology in a small but not insignificant number of those vulnerable to it.

"At the risk of sounding alarmist, the riots that were seen could become themselves a warning for increasing polarisation, radicalisation, disorder, and violence if we fail to change course.

"The far right has pushed the narrative that migrants have caused Ireland's ills which, in reality, existed prior to the influx of people seen in 2022. The most pivotal of these social issues, around which people become most impassioned, is housing. Sentiments of "we can't even look after our own..." are becoming more prevalent across Irish society in relation to migration and in the context of the ever growing number of homeless people and ever worsening housing crisis.

"If this sentiment is to be quelled, and anti-migrant narratives prevented from spreading and becoming more mainstream, the origins of the housing crisis, the defining issue of Irish society, must be clarified and responsibility taken. Otherwise, the easily other-able migrant community will be scapegoated, and the government will be complicit.

"The quotes here portray the fear and upset that is felt across the Co-op team, and their earnest efforts to support each other through a period plagued by division.

"What comes through is that this fear has been and is being exacerbated by the State much less quelled by it. That is most unsettling.

"What is needed now is to create a brave space, where people are enabled to share honestly and equally to facilitate individual and collective learning," he said.



THE STATE DID NOT LISTEN

Community worker staff quotes regarding events of Nov 23 in Dublin

The staff of Dublin City Community Co-op were asked by CEO Noel Wardick to share their honest reflections, emotions and feelings following the events of the 23rd November. These are the responses from ten community workers:

STAFF MEMBER 1

"SECOND CLASS CITIZENS"

"I feel shocked, sad and scared of the whole situation from the stabbings to the riots. I'm angry how the situation was handled and how our city and the people of the north east inner city are being labelled.

"I'm not feeling safe anymore. The lack of Garda presence. It's so tough bringing up children.

"Situations in the community are going to get worse if the government don't make change - it's a poverty trap and we are feeling like second class citizens."

STAFF MEMBER 2

"COLLECTIVE FEAR"

"When thinking of the riots, the emotions that come to mind are fear, anger, and frustration.

"However, there is a numbness that I feel too, stemming from exhaustion from speaking for so long about the collective fear many ethnic minorities have and currently are expressing and experiencing right now across Ireland.

"Ireland doesn't feel comfortable, let alone safe, for me right now, and I am tired of speaking about my and others hurt and pain, so that I/we are afforded a little bit of humanity."

STAFF MEMBER 3

"WILL WE FEEL SAFE AGAIN?"

"I feel heartbroken. The place I grew up in is now not safe. Me and my family consider Ireland our home, we are scared to be home! Will we feel safe and welcome again? I feel worried and frightened for all the people that this was impacted on.

"Dublin is my chosen home and I moved mountains to be here. To see the place I love most, the city my children know as home, dissolve into such chaos and rage broke our hearts. This city is a living, breathing thing and it's unwell."

STAFF MEMBER 4

"CO-OP STAFF A MICROCOSM OF THE INNER CITY"

"As I watched footage on social media of the lone Garda, fending off attackers, I felt so sorry for him. He was completely isolated from his colleagues. It was reminiscent of watching a pack of predators surrounding their prey. I have a friend who is a Guard, and I was so worried he would end up in a similar situation."

"I'm still processing how any person can put a public call out to 'burn out' people who have come to the country which has a reputation for being the 'friendliest country in Europe' makes my blood boil."

"When I stand back a little and look at the Co-op staff, I realise that we are somewhat of a microcosm of the population of the Inner City. We have people who live and work in the area, people who work but go home to other parts the city when they finish for the day and we have several colleagues who are not Irish born. It's difficult to see our work mates who are now worried for their safety when simply coming in to work, and hearing the stories from their

communities, while also hearing how the changing landscape and population has affected those who still have to live in the area."

"It has also been quite sobering to hear the fears of the people with whom we work, and not just those who are non-Irish born, but people who have been born and reared in the inner city and Dublin. There is anger from all sides at the consistent failure of successive Irish Governments to tackle wider social issues in the country, such as health and housing."

"It beggars belief that this came as shock to some political quarters. You would have to be very naive to think there would be no repercussions as a result of concentrating people from a myriad of cultural backgrounds, a lot of who are coming from regions of serious conflict and highly traumatised, in an area which is already dealing with disadvantage and poverty, without sufficient mental and physical health supports. The existing communities were already trying to navigate a system which is under extreme pressure to deliver services."

"To then increase a population concentration with high needs into a community without increasing the crucial services to support all community members, goes beyond thoughtlessness and enters the realm of ignorant dissociation with life in the real world."



• 2009 protest in Dublin against cuts impacting communities. PHOTO: A. MEAGHER.

STAFF MEMBER 5

ATTACK ON CHILDREN

"SHOCKED ME TO MY CORE"

"Two weeks before the riots that took place in Dublin city, I had walked down to the Ilac centre around lunch time as I often have done a million times before this being the community that I grew up in. I have never felt afraid or uneasy in my community. I remember remarking on my return to the office that I had witnessed three separate incidents on this short walk that for me reflected the undercurrent of tension and uneasiness that was palpable in the air.

"The day of the horrific attack on the children and their caretaker shocked me to my core that such an awful event could happen in our community to our most vulnerable, I cannot imagine the pain and fear that the families directly affected must feel, as the vision of a lifesaving defib next to the tiniest of Paw Patrol schoolbags will stay with me forever, I think.

"For this event to be used as a catalyst to wreak havoc and division on our community saddened, disappointed and disgusted me, but unfortunately did not shock me. The very loud voices screaming right and very loud voices scream left ... nobody trying to understand or listen to the other and the whisper of the ordinary trying to just live life day to day, communities both new and old.

"The events of that week impacted on everyone, breeding fear, anger and division, piloted by lack of knowledge, understanding, support, education, and resources.

"I was fearful for friends, colleagues and people I support. Our country, always known as the land of a thousand welcomes, felt anything but.

"I was also angry at the language and labels once again being associated with the north east inner city and in no way a real or accurate reflection of the people that live in our community."

THE STATE DID

STAFF MEMBER 6

"ALL THE CONCERNS WE HAVE BEEN RAISING WERE IGNORED"

"My go to phrase all last week was trust comes on the back of a tortoise and leaves on a racehorse - that sums up a small part of how I felt when all the concerns we have been raising were ignored and culminated in the terrible events in the city."

"Words are everything and how quickly words were used to contain the awfulness of what happened....'The Incident' it is now being called - the stabbing of three junior infant children and their female minder to near death and a subsequent riot lasting over four hours and worse than anything since the hunger strikes and the Bloody Sunday riots and burning of the British embassy. It's typical Irish understatement - the Emergency, the Troubles, the Incident."

The staff member listed what annoyed them:

"The mental containment of the issue to the North Inner City... as a trouble spot and what do you expect from there."

"The reference to young thugs, demonising every young person when arrests show it is the older organising right wing groups lighting the tinder box."

"The helplessness of seeing the stabbing, the build-up to the riot and watching the immediate knee jerk response of both blaming migrants and locals for issues that are so far beyond their competencies to manage, nor should it be it for them to manage."

"The lack of a plan. Seeing shoppers, workers, bus personnel and gardai terrorised."

"Hearing the Garda helicopter reminded me of when I lived in Belfast. Seeing the international headlines calling it the 'Dublin Riots' and the feeling of shame it brought. The anger knowing how far this has knocked back, to use the Northern expression, community relations."

"The shame of how quickly children and women's lives were being worried about in terms of their survival in case it set off more trouble."

"The nervousness of coming into work but knowing it was much worse for our migrant and local staff. Seeing the damage in the cold light of day and people avoiding each other's eye contact."

"Listening to how our staff were feeling and the helplessness it felt like. Talking to schools and hearing how they had to close early, seeing the double trauma it brought to the community. Knowing a number of these families will leave. In a number of cases school was/is the only safe place they had, and this is being taken from them. Talking to community members and having no clear answers to any of the potential future steps we need to take. Still seeing social media churn out opinions relentlessly (from people) who did not know the people, the area, the context."

"Having to make plans around safety, Garda liaison and potential counselling for children, hearing plans from migrants about leaving Ireland, the anger and shame mixed together - never a healthy mix."

"Knowing that local, hard-working businesses like One Society Cafe could lose everything after the riots while the multi-millionaire owners of the homeless accommodations are sitting pretty fills me with rage."

"Seeing a complete lack of political leadership around all the issues that face the inner city. Seeing the intergenerational issues and complexities being weaponised to give simplistic answers to issues of poverty, health, housing, employment, education, migration, and most of all the othering of the inner city like it's a disease that might infect middle Ireland."

"Knowing that this is a turning point psychologically, socially, and this has given permission for raw racism to rise pretty much unchecked."

"The anti-racism responses are not working, and we will need much deeper work to begin to combat it as well as seeing that all inner city residents have a stake in our society no matter what."

STAFF MEMBER 7

NO CARE FOR SCHOOL THAT WAS ATTACKED - WHERE MY SIBLINGS ATTEND

"It felt very surreal for me not only being from the North Inner City but also having attended Gaelscoil Colaiste Mhuire as a student, and currently having siblings there. I've seen similar events happen abroad in the UK or US, but never would I have ever thought an attack like that could happen in Ireland, let alone in Dublin on my doorstep."

"I was utterly shocked and appalled with the malicious intent people brought with them into the city centre and those who completely took advantage of the attack for their own personal gain (looting) or to use it as an excuse to cause destruction."

"In the days following the attack and the rioting I felt extremely marginalised and seen prejudice from the news media and especially the government as everyone in the riot were labelled as 'white Irish men' from 'The Inner City'. Also, still being in a state of shock from the events at the school, I felt a lack of care and complete disregard from the government and ministers toward myself and other victims of the school."

"Still now, weeks later, I feel the same disregard and lack of care toward the victims of the attack because of an overshadow from the riots later that day."

STAFF MEMBER 8

"I'M IN A NEAR BLIND RAGE WITH THE STATE"

"We are a tough, experienced, hardened yet very compassionate team who has been through the horrors of the Hutch/Kinahan murder feud, the Recession, the Pandemic, the endless challenges caused by decades of poverty, neglect, abandonment and working in a State-created 'poverty hub' but the events of Thursday 23rd November have shaken me to the core. I think I have been destabilised by the events like I have never been before. I am upset, emotional, fearful, but mostly I'm in a near blind rage with the State that they have allowed our country to get this close to a dangerous precipice despite all our warnings over many, many months."

"When the anger with the State quells, mostly I am left with feelings of terrible sadness at what happened and especially at what drove the events of 23rd November. When one thinks of some of the phrases and slogans in common public use, such as 'Kill all Immigrants' and 'Let's meet at 7 pm and go hunting for migrants', the urge to put my head in my hands and just start crying is overwhelming."

The staff member recalled how the Nazis started as a "tiny ragtag bunch of angry white men", how the Hutus turned so quickly on Tutsi people in Rwanda, and how a tiny minority kept South African apartheid going for decades.

"So, what's terrifying for those of us at the coalface is knowing that our political leadership and middle Ireland is mostly fast asleep at the wheel."

"The shocking lack of preparedness by senior Gardai and their failure to see this coming is something I honestly cannot fathom. We knew it was coming. How could they not know? I have such admiration for the brave gardai who faced down the rioters on the night of the 23rd November but the fact that they were so exposed and let down by their leadership is terrifying."

"Not only were the riot organisers 'hunting' for immigrants they were also 'hunting' for gardai and Garda vehicles.... terrified doesn't even begin to describe my feelings watching the events unfold. "Despite individual Garda bravery and courage on the night of the riots the institution of the gardai suffered a humiliating defeat, and the Far Right is now emboldened beyond belief.....does the government have any idea how scared this makes people feel?"

"Most gardai are white, most officials are white, most politicians are

NOT LISTEN (Continued)

white....and most are middle/upper middle class. They simply haven't a clue what is happening under their noses. They have no idea what it's like to be scared sh*tless because of how you look, speak and sound.

"As for the media with their 'othering' and disgusting bias against the good, honest and proud people of the north inner city... When celebrations happen in town, when parades such as the Easter Rising celebrations happen in town the media reports them as taking place on O'Connell Street or in the city centre but when there is a riot or violence in the very same area they report the events as taking place 'in the north inner city'.

"Talking to my colleagues in our office, hearing them talk to each other and knowing they are afraid, fearful, sad, worried all the time, exhausted from everything, that their families are constantly calling them asking if they are OK - that makes me sad too and leaves me very unsure how best to support them and assure them..... even though that's my job."

"It's been a crushing and devastating few weeks for us, we are very shaken, but I can tell you one thing we'll never give up and never give in. The consequences of doing that are just too grave to even think about."



STAFF MEMBER 9

"THAT HORRIBLE FEELING THAT YOU HAVE"

"I have been living in Ireland for over 16 years now and I always thought I was lucky to move into a country where racism and discrimination were never felt publicly. When speaking to other Eastern European expat fellows living in other countries, there was always a feeling of incredulity when I spoke of the Irish one thousand welcomes. Sure, there were always the migrant challenges, but there was always the safe and warm feeling of being a part of something.

"Until Thursday, the 23rd of November 2023, a historic day. We've all lived through the recession, the pandemic, other historic events and still, we came through. That Thursday though, felt different. Not only that Thursday, but the days and weeks that followed.

"That horrible feeling that you have to look over your shoulder when walking down the street, when someone shouts, perhaps a greeting, but still you jolt at the sound of a raised voice. The uncertainty of ever speaking to a stranger in the street or in a pub, which was always such a part of the Irish fabric of society.

"The disappointment and despair that the Irish State has failed its own citizens and all the people that have chosen to make a better life here and to contribute to the Irish future. How do we come back from that? How do we mend the burned bridges, how do we mend the broken trust? How can one day turn one's life on its head and leave you thinking, 'Is it worth it anymore?'

"I could leave, me and my family but then again, THIS IS ALSO MY



HOME and my COUNTRY!"

STAFF MEMBER 10

"I FEEL OVERWHELMED BY... THE LACK OF CLEAR AND INSPIRING LEADERSHIP"

"In the immediate aftermath I was shocked and stunned that young children and their carers were attacked so viciously and in broad daylight.

"Even though it didn't actually happen to me it was so close physically and there was the proximity of one of our staff's sister who attends the same school. So many ramifications.

"The next day felt confusing because I had fearful thoughts as I made my way into work and yet I felt it was really important to be in the office to offer solidarity, presence: It was a statement that you (whoever you is!) are not going to intimidate/silence me.

"I myself was in no immediate danger. As I type this, I'm aware of shame when I remember the thoughts I had while listening to a staff colleague from an ethnic migrant background talking about her father's friends being beaten up and about her own harassment. While I feel distress and concern and I empathise with my migrant colleagues and migrants in general and wonder how I could support them, I simultaneously feel relieved that I'm a white Irish female.

"I feel despair and horror at the posts of people saying things like 'hunt them down', or when watching images of a lone Garda surrounded by a lynching mob. I'm enraged by these older men who are weaponising this tragic situation to serve their own malevolent ends.

"My heart breaks for the parents and family of the little girl whose life is hanging by a thread.

"I feel rage at the blatant disregard of the politicians to an authentic analysis and understanding the nuance of the circumstances that actually gave rise to this situation. Disingenuousness, lack of leadership, faffing about the place, (saying) they didn't know this was coming despite numerous warnings, a refusal to think beyond their own narrow lens, their willingness to point the finger, look for the quick reason and solution - that characterises the majority of politicians I've heard speaking and it frustrates me. I feel it like a pressure on my chest.



*Image from freepik.com

"I feel overwhelmed by it all, by the scale of the issues that underpin such events, by the lack of clear and inspiring leadership, I don't need answers. I just want to see someone in power stand up and be willing to be accountable for it, for working towards meaningful responses.

"On Saturday morning I woke up in a funk! This wasn't tiredness, or depression or lack of motivation. In the evening I went for a walk and called one of my wise women. I heard myself say 'My heart is broken'. My wise woman told me: 'Simply be heartbroken'.

"That was such a relief! Simply allow the heartbreak, nothing to fix, nothing to change. We are so conditioned to 'problem solve'. It removes our humanity. Being heartbroken is part of what makes us human. Allowing it gave rise to the heaviness lifting. My resisting the heartbreak was creating the heaviness.

"The communities we work in carry heartbreak over generations. Denying this gives rise to addiction, frustration and all the issues we see every day. Denying our humanity creates brutality. Embracing our humanity gives rise to compassionate consideration and connection offering the potential for credible responses."



GROWING RICH-POOR GAP MAPPED

- 195,992 people now live in areas classed as very or extremely disadvantaged

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

The number of people living in areas classed as disadvantaged or extremely disadvantaged in 2022 increased to 195,992. This was up from 143,506 in 2016, according to the 2022 Pobal HP Deprivation Index which was launched on November 2.

Pobal administers and manages Government and EU funding to address disadvantage and support social inclusion.

The mapping service, which is the State's primary social gradient tool, found an improvement nationally in measures such as employment and population growth, with levels largely returning to those observed in 2006.

However, persistent disadvantage remains for many communities, with urban areas containing more extremes of both highly disadvantaged and highly affluent areas. Rural areas tend to see less of these extremes.

The index further reveals that:

- Disadvantaged communities experience significantly higher levels of unemployment and low educational attainment, with higher rates of lone parents evident.
- Disadvantage is experienced disproportionately in small pockets in Dublin city centre, north and west suburbs, in Waterford and Limerick cities, on the outskirts of Cork city, and in a small number of rural towns.

- Relative affluence continues to be seen in South Dublin and in the commuter belts surrounding Dublin, Cork and Galway. New housing developments outside cities are also leading to new areas of affluence being recorded outside of traditional suburban areas.

The index uses the latest census data to analyse ten measures of an area's levels of disadvantage. These include educational attainment, employment status and the numbers living in individual households. Almost 19,000 small areas (50-200 households) were indexed leading to the development of a detailed map of the relative affluence and disadvantage.

It is used in allocating resources for programmes funded by government departments covering rural development, community development, childcare, higher education, primary schools, health, sports capital spending and more.

At the launch, Joe O'Brien, Minister of State for Community Development, noted the index's usefulness to both policymakers



- The areas marked red should in theory see the greatest investment in community development and social inclusion. Above: Dublin city centre as displayed on Pobal's HP Deprivation Index map.

Niall Sexton was among the community sector workers at the launch. He said, "Targeted supports for disadvantaged areas are absolutely critical."

and communities. He said, "This information is invaluable as it allows for effective planning and the targeting of resources in ways that have a positive and lasting impact."

Anna Shakespeare CEO of Pobal said, "The 2022 Pobal HP Deprivation Index has highlighted an overall improvement for the majority of communities in Ireland, however this is not being experienced equally. The distribution of disadvantage across the country has remained largely similar to previous years, which highlights that this is a long term and entrenched phenomenon."

She added, "At Pobal, we are committed to working on behalf of government to support communities to combat disadvantage. This tool helps to create an understanding of the challenge of disadvantage and where it is prevalent, which is an important step towards achieving social inclusion for all."

Ms Shakespeare also paid tribute to the Index's late co-author Trutz Hasse:

"Trutz was a passionate advocate for equality and social justice. By working to create the Pobal HP Deprivation Index he has secured a powerful legacy, that at its core will help flow to communities across Ireland that need assistance".

Niall Sexton, manager of the Darndale-based Preparing for Life Early Intervention Programme, was among the community sector workers at the launch. Remarking on X on the growing inequality, he said, "Targeted supports for disadvantaged areas are absolutely critical."

The One Family organisation agreed, pointing out, "Many one-parent families live in these communities. The case for targeted supports has never been stronger."

One of the questions asked at the event was: "Why are we not great at investing in measuring impact?"

The launch of the findings on the new index received widespread media coverage across print and broadcast media.

How to use the Pobal HP Deprivation Index

The 2022 Pobal HP Deprivation Index is a free online map viewer. It shows the deprivation score for geographic areas such as county, constituency, electoral division or small area.

Percentage data for an area is provided under categories such as unemployment, educational attainment and population change.

The data can be extracted for further analysis through a geoprofiling viewer and compared with previous years.

Try it out for yourself with this link: <https://data.pobal.ie/portal/apps/sites/#pobal-maps>

The HP in the name



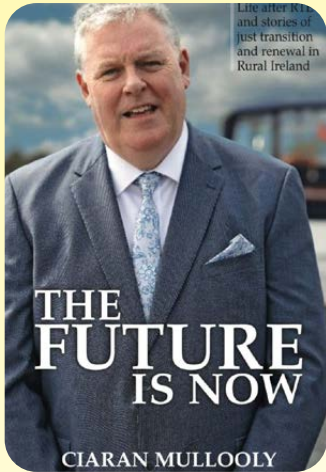
- The late Trutz Haase, pictured in Malta. Image courtesy of Jonathan Pratschke.

Trutz Haase's passion for social research was "rooted in a commitment to achieving a more equal society and pursuing social justice," said Dr Jonathan Pratschke in a tribute to his late colleague in 2018. (The full tribute is on Page 9 of Changing Ireland, Issue 60, June 2018).

Trutz himself wrote in this publication in 2016 calling for "fairer and more rational forms of resource allocation" and expressed concerns over how the government at the time allocated resources, particularly in rural areas.

The HP in the index's name comes from Trutz's and his colleague Jonathan's surnames.

Start 2024 with a book from a community worker or activist you admire!



Published in September, this is Ciaran Mullooly's third book. 'The Future Is Now' covers the former news correspondent's involvement in community development since leaving RTÉ. He is now a community worker with Roscommon LEADER Partnership.

'The Future Is Now' also examines possibilities for a just transition in rural Ireland. It looks at the Midlands' changing industrial landscape with Bord na Móna and the ESB moving away from peat-fired power generation. It also gives guidance to village renewal.

Ask in your local library.

To buy: €13.77 (Amazon).



'Repealed' is a celebration and analysis of a 35-year-long grassroots movement that successfully overturned the ban on abortion in the Republic of Ireland.

The book unpacks the history behind the State's eighth amendment to the constitution. It draws on lessons learned from the groundbreaking campaign in 2018 and it tells the story through the lens of the activists. However, the new legislation is regarded as too conservative, meaning many women still have to take the boat and plane to Britain. Campaigning continues. 'Repealed' was published in 2022 by Pluto Books.

Ask in your local library.

To buy: €23.80 (Easons).

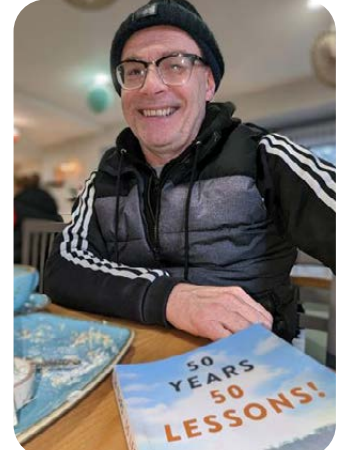


'The Road That Rises' is a memoir by activist and campaigner Dermot Hayes.

The book explores his life as a child growing up in Corofin, County Clare, and covers his decades as a trade union activist, an environmental campaigner in his native Burren, a disability activist and much more. It is no surprise - and to Dermot's credit - that all profits from 'The Road that Rises' are being donated to the Clare Leader Forum and Corofin Hall and Field Fund. You can buy the book in most Clare bookshops. If living outside the county, contact Dermot on Twitter: @HayesEnnis

Ask in your local library.

To buy: €20 (O'Mahony's)



Derry youth worker Fergal Barr previously argued in these pages for university courses teaching youth and community work to include humour in the curriculum. He can see the glaringly obvious that others fail to see.

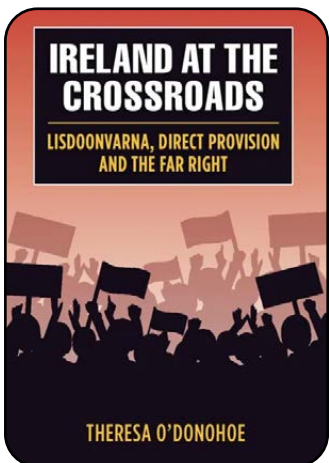
In '50 Years - 50 Lessons', he doesn't tell anyone to change. It's not a self-help book. Its purpose is to encourage reflection, nurture curiosity, and challenge assumptions. Fergal's lessons are underpinned by the values and beliefs he gained from his life and career in community development.

Published in October.

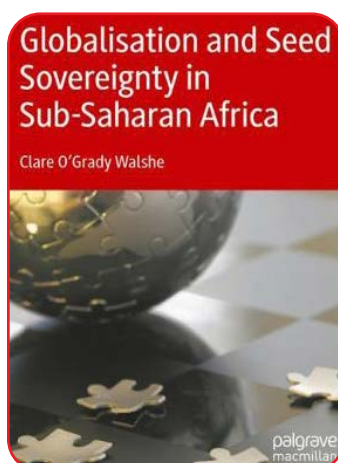
Ask in your local library.

To buy: €27.99 (Easons).

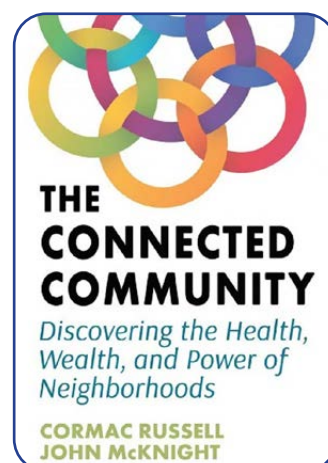
Ones you may have missed! Take four...



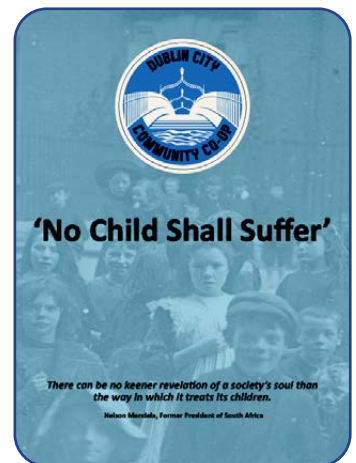
Theresa O'Donohue tells how a small town helped asylum seekers despite a lack of consultation, limited local services and exploitation by the far right. Published by Orpen Press. Price: €15.00.



Written by Dr Clare O'Grady Walshe (for her PhD) and lauded by famous Irish travel writer, the late Dervla Murphy. Published in 2020 by Palgrave Macmillan. Price: €53.49, or nearly new from Irish Seed Savers for €5.



Run if they want you to scale up, says Cormac Russell. A Dub, he calls for restoring "the culture of community" through participation. Published in 2022 by Berrett-Koehler Publishers. Price: €23.52 (Easons).



First person accounts of community work amidst poverty and exclusion, published in 2021 by Dublin City Community Co-op. Price: N/A. Download: <https://dublincitycommunitycoop.ie/>

PALESTINE: ETHICS V. CAREER

If you're afraid to speak out now, you will fail your community - McAliskey

- "For people who say, 'But we could lose our funding' - We all have ethical choices to make."

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

Veteran civil rights activist and community worker Bernadette McAliskey from Co. Tyrone has resisted imperialism all her life.

She experienced poverty growing up, became a socialist feminist, was elected to Westminster, witnessed Bloody Sunday, survived an attempted assassination and went on to set up the highly regarded South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP) based in Dungannon.

She was a keynote speaker in 2018 when the World Community Development Conference came to Maynooth where she was welcomed with thunderous applause. She told those gathered that, if they had nothing to say about wealth, funding and the rise of the right, it was time to go home.

While retired, she remains committed to social justice and human rights.



• Bernadette McAliskey speaking to Changing Ireland at Shannon Airport.

"Practice your ethics now. Stand up for what you believe in. You have to believe in something, other than a career or a project that works."

WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN

Speaking to Changing Ireland this November after addressing a peace rally at Shannon Airport, Bernadette said that people who have mixed feelings about campaigning for peace, including community and youth workers, should practice their ethics now and "stand up for what you believe in".

People must choose between ethics and their career, she said. Speaking directly to Ireland's community workers, and particularly to some who may be afraid of consequences from condemning Israeli aggression, she said, "If you're afraid to speak out about injustice (now)... you will fail when the chips are down to defend your own community".

"I've now retired (from STEP). But I always have something to say to community workers. I would say to community workers who are asking, 'Why would I get involved in protests?' First of all, in achieving social change, it is achieved politically or it's achieved militarily. That's the basics. (Some may ask) why would they get involved in what they maybe see as political?

"Politics has a big 'P', a wee 'p' and sometimes no 'p' at all. At the same time, that's the process it is. It's a process of democracy, of ethics, against injustice, against racism and against oppression.

"So we're not just changing the world, we're changing it for the better, changing it for social justice and that requires a lot of different activity within the community. If you're organising (a project for) young people to build their own self-confidence - for what? For what? If you're building within the neighbourhood for a community to have its democratic say - for what?

"People have to understand the context of their lives and the context of their work in the political, social and economic life of the country," she said.

'WE COULD LOSE OUR FUNDING'

"And if you're afraid to speak out about injustice when you're merely asked to witness the rights of people suffering, you will fail when the chips are down to defend your own community, to defend their rights, to speak out for them.

"For people who say - 'It's alright saying that, but we could lose our funding', 'I could lose my job', 'It will be used against me as a paid worker' - we all have ethical choices to make.

"If community work is merely a career for which you will not make an ethical judgement now, take my word for it, to save your career at some point you will make an unethical judgement.

"So, practice your ethics now. Stand up for what you believe in. You have to believe in something, other than a career or a project that works," she said.

ISRAELI MINISTER EVOKED CROMWELL

In her speech to hundreds of anti-war campaigners, she linked "the punishment and The Nakba of the Palestinians" to what the Irish experienced under British rule.

"The attempt to drive Palestinians, as one Israeli minister said recently, to the desert or Ireland reminded me of Oliver Cromwell inviting the people of this nation to flee to the barren

lands of Connacht or go to hell. And in the massacres of Drogheda and Wexford he made clear he didn't care which one we chose. So we have an historic link with oppression throughout the world," she said.

"Sadly, in modern times, our governments have led us to links with oppressing people across the world. We need to make them understand - no more. No ministerial backside should occupy a ministerial seat after the next general election without a promise to maintain ad infinitum our neutrality in going to war on behalf of anybody in the world who would seek to oppress another," she said.

CHILDREN HAVE RIGHTS

She concluded, "We read out the names of children whose lives were stolen from them. Children have rights. The constitution of this nation says it will protect the children of the nation equally. Let us pledge ourselves to protect the children of the world as if we had given birth to them ourselves."

An Open Letter from Irish civil society organisations for peace in Gaza

- 200 civil society groups plea for peace

TO:

An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, An Tánaiste, Micheál Martin, Minister for Environment, Eamon Ryan.

All human life is precious and no matter where we come from, we all deserve to live free from violence and to put our children to bed, knowing that they will wake up safely.

The killing of so many innocent people by Hamas sent shockwaves throughout the world and we grieve for all the lives lost. There is no justification for the indiscriminate killing or the holding of civilian hostages.

Now we watch in horror as the ultra right-wing leader of the Israeli government, Benjamin Netanyahu launches a genocidal war, pledging to "open the gates of hell", on innocent people trapped in Gaza with no hope of escape. Having already lived in an apartheid state for decades, the people of Gaza are now without food, water or electricity.

As civil society organisations working for freedom, equality and justice for all people in our communities and across the world, we call on you to do all you can to stop the atrocities and war crimes taking place. The collective punishment and intentional targeting of innocent civilians in retaliation for the attack by Hamas can never be justified.

We recognise the leadership you have shown in attempting to influence fellow government leaders across the EU to demand that international law is upheld and human rights are protected.

We need you to do all you can to stop governments around the world aiding the Israeli government in committing war crimes and breaking international law by sending military assistance and halting aid payments to Gaza when the people there need it most.

We need you to add your voice to the call for the establishment of a humanitarian corridor to allow urgent supplies to be brought to the people of Gaza and help secure the return of Israeli hostages unharmed.

We need you to force social media corporations headquartered in Ireland, to stop the alarming spread of online disinformation that is fuelling polarisation and is ramping up calls for the retributive massacre of the Palestinian people in Gaza.

A future of peace and safety for all, grounded in justice, freedom and equality for all, is the only option.

Signed

200 civil society groups and organisations in Ireland had signed this letter, when last checked, and it remained open for others to sign.

W: <https://www.uplift.ie/news/open-letter-gaza/>

UPLIFT PEOPLE POWERED CHANGE

A community sector lecturer in an Irish university has told *Changing Ireland* of their "shame" in not signing a petition by colleagues condemning Israel's "campaign of ethnic cleansing".

They felt there could be consequences for their career and for EU funding applications.

"A lot of those who signed the petition are retired or nearing the end of their careers," they noted, fearing other academics are also self-censoring.

The academic had previously joined the international movement promoting boycotts, divestment, and economic sanctions against Israel. This was raised in a disparaging way in separate fora in the following years, leaving the academic with a clear feeling that publicly criticising Israel may have consequences for career development in academia.

This may have led academics in another university feeling compelled to pen a letter to their University management outlining these exact concerns and asking the management to ensure that there would not be career or funding consequences for those colleagues who voiced their concerns over ethnic cleansing.



• Academia was represented at a recent peace rally at Shannon Airport by Lelia Doolan (above) among others.

PHOTO BY TONY GREHAN.

SPOKE OUT EARLY

While some EU countries and EU representatives demurred or gave a green light to the Israeli government to bomb the heavily populated and under siege Gaza strip, Irish politicians spoke out, including many in government.

Minister of State Joe O'Brien once worked in the West Bank. On October 18, he said, "The occupation is one of the most elaborate, cruel and well-resourced systems of oppression in operation in the world today and it's the world's great failure that it has not only persisted for so many decades but has grown with little meaningful halt to its advancement."

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar said Israel's response to the October 7 attack by Hamas "resembles something more approaching revenge".

Both the Taoiseach and Minister O'Brien had previously condemned

the Hamas attack.

For his part, President Michael D Higgins called for a cessation of violence in Israel and Gaza and said Israeli attacks on Gaza hospitals "must be investigated, certainly, as a war crime."

At international level, Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, speaking as chair of The Elders, condemned Hamas for its "horrendous terror attacks" and Israel for the "unacceptable collective punishment of the population of Gaza".

It described Israel's "atrocities" as "clear violations of international humanitarian law".

The Elders, comprising of global leaders, was founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007 to pursue peace, justice, human rights and a sustainable planet.



• Mary Robinson in Ballina in 2016.

PHOTO BY A. MEAGHER.

Roma women's health needs would be unknown without Pavee Point



•Photos from the HSE's bilingual information guide to support Roma women during and after pregnancy.

BY KATHY MASTERSON

A quarter of Roma women's first contact with maternity services is when they arrive in labour at the hospital. Without translators available, patients and medics rely on Google Translate to communicate. We wouldn't know about this if it wasn't for the tremendous work being done with Roma people by Pavee Point.

The seven-strong Roma Programme team in Pavee Point has expanded in recent years, and works across the areas of health, employment and inclusion, as well as celebrating Roma history and culture.

In 2018, Pavee Point worked on the National Roma Needs Assessment, which remains the only national piece of research looking at the needs of the Roma community.

The research highlighted the disadvantages faced by Roma in Ireland. It includes some sobering statistics, such as the fact that 20 per cent of the community here live in poverty.

Another shocking statistic was the fact that a quarter of Roma women's first contact with maternity services is when they arrive at hospital in labour.

Unfortunately, it seems little has changed since 2018.

During EU Roma Week in April, the HSE's National Social Inclusion Office and Pavee Point launched 'Roma Daja', the first targeted maternal health information resource for Roma women.*

Gabi Muntean, a community

*Jenny Liston of Pavee Point said:
"The maternal health issues that came up shocked everybody."*

development worker with Pavee Point, who is Roma herself, told Changing Ireland: "Nothing really changed from 2018 to 2023. Women still don't go to see the doctor before they give birth.

"I gave birth 27 years ago in Romania. But what I heard from the girls that I spoke with, it's not much different (in Ireland today). They were not speaking very nice with me, they were not treating me nice. In Ireland, it seems that the experience is the same. You can see the difference between being Roma in a room full of women that are non-Roma. So everywhere I would say, racism exists, and discrimination, and people are not changing."

To coincide with the launch of the information booklet, Pavee Point launched a new report on Roma maternal health.

Jenny Liston, programme coordinator of Pavee Point's Roma Programme said: "The maternal health issues that came up shocked everybody. We wanted to try and dig a little deeper into why is that happening for Roma women."

Jenny said the report, entitled 'Romneango Sfato/Roma Women's Voices' "is an important step in highlighting the health inequalities experienced by Roma women in

Ireland".

"We released the research on the same day to say: 'Yes, Roma women need more information. But the services also need to know what Roma women are saying because it's a two-way process'.

"In terms of how their pain and their medical needs are treated and taken seriously, we've seen - not just in our research - that migrant women's experience of maternity services is very similar around unmet medical needs, women being more at risk of something going wrong.

"There's definitely a question around women from ethnic minority communities' experiences of the maternity services, particularly for Roma women. Lots of women talked about not having access to an interpreter, not understanding what's happening if there's a health issue or medical emergency, or relying wholly on Google Translate.

"Bianca, who's on our team, is in her early 20s and has had one baby. The nurse said to her: 'Oh you're Roma, we'll see you very soon again so'. This kind of presumption that you're a Roma woman, you're just going to keep having babies. She said that she felt humiliated."

FORCED STERILISATION

Pavee Point believes that there is a need for health professionals to have a better understanding of the history of the Roma community.

"It's not that long ago, right up until the early 2000s, that there were cases in Slovakia of forced sterilisation of Roma women.

"500,000 Roma were murdered during the Holocaust, and a lot of the Roma families that were brought to concentration camps were medically experimented on. So the views of doctors and trusting those in power is not a natural fit for the Roma community," explained Jenny.

UKRAINIAN ROMA

An unexpected challenge that arose last year was the need for targeted supports and an understanding of challenges specific to refugees from the Ukrainian Roma community.

"Ukrainian Roma are facing additional barriers in getting across the borders and getting the same access to aid. We knew that this was an issue coming down the track. We've set up a phone line now, specifically for Ukrainian Roma when they need support," said Jenny.

"A lot of families were initially refused temporary protection when they came. It's still going on. One of the reasons they would be refused would be based on lack of



• At the launch of new research, in February, on employment among the Roma community undertaken by Pavée Point in collaboration with Maynooth University.



• Jenny Liston, Pavée Point.



• Bianca Tanase, Pavée Point.



• Gabi Muntean, Pavée Point.

(Continued from previous page)

evidence of being in Ukraine at the time of the war, even if they have Ukrainian passports.

“A lot of the Roma families might not have any English or literacy. They also mightn’t have things that may be expected by immigration like bank accounts, or formal documentation.

“We came across discriminatory behaviour, and a lack of understanding that you can be Roma and Ukrainian. Also there would be a lot of Ukrainian support staff who might have their own views as well around the Roma community.”

MAKING BASIC FACTS KNOWN

Pavée Point Roma Programme staff have since carried out work with immigration staff, interpreters and various organisations working with Ukrainians “just trying to raise awareness that there are Ukrainian Roma”.

Some 200 Ukrainian Roma have so far accessed the helpline, however Pavée Point estimates there they may be up to 500 Ukrainian Roma currently living in Ireland.

TAKE ONE FAMILY

Jenny revealed: “We had a case recently where a family were evicted from the hotel that they were assigned because they didn’t pay their food bill. They (Ukrainian refugees) now have to pay for food out of their social welfare.

“They came out to City West where nobody would speak with them, and they ended up sleeping out the first night, their three children with them. Then someone told them about us.

“They rang us and we realised that the family didn’t have a social welfare payment - that’s why they didn’t pay for the food. They couldn’t fill in the forms, and nobody had supported them to fill in the forms.”

DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

“We’re always responding to what we see in the community. Like the rest of Pavée Point, we use the community development approach, and we’re focused on collective action and promoting the rights of the Roma community and we do this through working directly with the community, but also policy development and working with service providers, with the State in terms of how to address racism and discrimination that the Roma community face in Ireland,” noted Jenny.

CANNOT GET SUPPORT

Pavée Point has done much campaigning around the impact of the habitual residence condition on the Roma community, which means

that many cannot access social welfare and housing supports.

Jenny commented: “About half of Roma who had applied for social welfare weren’t successful. This leaves the community without a safety net and excludes families from the basics like child benefit. This is the main issue that excludes the Roma community from a lot of support. People are living on the margins a lot of the time.”

Gabi added: “I was thinking after the Needs Assessment in 2018 something will change. There have been some changes, but, for example, parents still cannot have the child benefit because the parents are not habitual residents. The poverty was and is still really huge in the Roma community.”

PEOPLE HIDING THEIR IDENTITY

New research on employment among the Roma community undertaken by Pavée Point in collaboration with Maynooth University was published in February.

For the research, 23 people from the Roma community were interviewed about their experiences and it showed they face significant inequality in the workplace.

“It came out really strongly that Roma people felt they had to hide their ethnicity when looking for work because they just feel that they will not get a job. A lot of Roma women said they wouldn’t wear their traditional clothes if they were looking for work,” explained Jenny.

RISE IN RACISM

Like many organisations working with migrant communities, Pavée Point has noticed a worrying rise in the influence of far-right anti-migrant sentiments, particularly online.

Jenny said:

“When we launched the employment research, it was well attended and it was a really positive event. But the comments below on every social media of these positive events - it’s desperate to see the racism that can follow something like that. So you can see how it’s difficult for people to put themselves out there and identify as being Roma. We’re all seeing the rise of that far-right rhetoric, not just anti-Roma racism but also anti-migrant. It’s scary, it really is.”

* The HSE’s 54-page guide for Roma women before and after pregnancy is available to download for free: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/mhml/roma-health/>

What next for community radio?

**Stations take a community development approach to broadcasting
Community engagement is high, but future funding a real challenge**

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

This theme for the 2023 Craol Féile and awards ceremony was promoting community, solidarity, diversity and access.

Craol is the network for Ireland's 35+ community radio stations and it supports staff and volunteers to stay focused on what makes the stations unique, successful and very special – their ethos, community ownership, egalitarianism, non-profitmaking and their work to promote cultural and linguistic diversity. They broadcast programmes you won't hear on commercial stations, nor even on RTÉ.

In terms of diversity, Craol has plenty examples of excellence. A programme goes out from one Dublin community station in English and Cantonese and it has listeners from Dublin to China (where they tune into the digital channel).

Nonetheless, as this year's Féile brochure says, "In an ever-changing world, where we see the demographics of our communities regularly fluctuating, it is key that our community radio stations understand the importance of diverse voices and strive to make the stations accessible to all."

People who would be shown the door if they called to a commercial station are welcomed into community radio station studios, provided with training and given programmes to produce and present.

If they truly excel, they might just pick up an award, as many did at the Féile in Athlone.

As Craol chair Claire Hall told the hundreds of attendees at the gala awards: "This has always been the focus of community radio. However we always strive to do it better and therefore equality, diversity and inclusion are at the forefront of our current three-year workplan."

She pointed to the annual output from community radio. Every station makes programmes that focus on the communities they serve while also covering national and global issues.

"These include programmes that discuss climate change, health, science, politics, history, arts, sports, music of all genres. Programmes go out in many languages including Irish, Ukrainian, Mandarin and Urdu.

She said, "Very importantly, programmes are broadcast by groups and individuals from the community



• Anita Guest from Dundalk FM is presented with a Silver Award for Access and Inclusion for her long-running show 'RehabCare on Air'.

PHOTO BY POLINA IZOTOVA

- **2,500 volunteers and 180 staff;**
- **in 21 fully licenced member stations;**
- **and over 15 aspirant stations;**
- **producing 135,000 hours of radio;**
- **And welcoming 100,000 individuals on air each year.**

who have their voice heard discussing community issues. This giving voice to the whole community is the sector's true strength."

SCHEMES GREAT, TURNOVER TOUGH

"Staff are mostly supported by funding from the Community Service Programme, and work placement schemes such as Community Employment, Tus, Jobs Initiative and Rural Social Schemes.

"These schemes are fantastic, they allow for an individual to come into the station where they get to know people, they receive excellent training and really get a chance to build their skills – and it also gives the station the benefit of what that individual brings and their on-site learning.

"It's a huge accomplishment for stations to be a positive part in what propels people forward.

However, once placements are over or the individual gains employment elsewhere they move on from the station," revealed Claire, adding that it was "tough on stations to have a rotation of people and to constantly be recruiting and training. Some excellent people are lost by stations because there isn't funding for more permanent positions."

Additionally, stations have struggled with additional costs due to Covid and due to the cost of living crisis. At the same time stations experienced decreases in sponsorship, advertising and fundraising. Stations try to pay decent wages "but the unfortunate fact of the matter is that all of this leaves stations with a funding issue," Claire explained.

Pobal support through the Community Services Programme, which it administers, is very welcome. However, there are challenges and the cuts since the

recession in 2010 have never been reinstated.

"While Pobal provides a grant towards the cost of hiring a manager and full-time equivalents for 13 of our stations, this grant does not meet the full employment costs," said Claire.

"We don't even know if this funding will continue into the future as Pobal now sees community radio as a non-priority area and stated recently that community radio stations may be more appropriately supported by other departments and state agencies," continued Claire.

"We are in need of a sustainable funding model for community radio," she added.

UN SOUND FUNDING

Community radio stations fared poorly when applying to the now defunct Broadcasting Authority of Ireland's Sound and Vision Fund.



• Take a bow Athlone Community Radio!



• Liffey Sound went home with at least two awards.

(Continued from previous page)

Claire said that in the last open funding round “slightly over 0.17% of the total fund was approved for community radio”. Only one community radio station was successful in its application.

Over 13 funding rounds, community radio received a total of €628,482 (1.17%) from a pot of €53.7 million.

“The difficulties in keeping the show on the road are endless – from a lack of consistent funding to the turnover all stations are experiencing in staff and volunteers. It explains why stations can have issues meeting agreed contracts,” noted Claire, assuring her peers that they can reach out to Craol when in difficulty.

“And yet, stations - through their broadcast hours, community engagement, training, volunteering, plus the excellent programming - are delivering important social benefits to the communities they serve. Our sector is unique.”

Rónán believes in "strong funding"



• Rónán Ó Domhnaill, the media development commissioner with the new body Coimisiún na Meán speaking in Athlone. PHOTO BY A. MEAGHER

Guest speaker Rónán Ó Domhnaill is the media development commissioner with the new body Coimisiún na Meán (the Media Commission). He acknowledged the funding challenge for community radio stations and, pointing out that they are ahead of the curve in how they operate, he gave assurances that better times lay ahead:

“As regards the (low) percentage of funding that comes your way, I hear what you’re saying. We’ve met lots of people from Craol. We know there’s a job of work to do.

“One of the ways we hope we can help is with the establishment of an overarching media fund that is put on a statutory basis. It’s not here yet, but it’s coming.”

“Next year will see the launch of a scheme to support journalism in regards to (coverage of) local democracy and court reporting,” he noted.

“We’re working at present on a gender, equality, diversity and inclusion strategy and we’ve been talking to Craol and other community broadcasters,” he said. The commissioner recognised that community radio stations

were working on gender, equality, diversity and inclusion measures “long before people like me were on stage talking about it”.

“You were doing it. It was happening. You were recognising the communities in your area,” he stated.

Mr Ó Domhnaill spoke about future opportunities for Irish language media and complimented community stations in Dublin and Belfast that broadcast in Irish.

He pointed out, “With Sound and Vision, it’s going to grow into a different type of fund – a platform neutral fund across radio, newspapers, tv and online. Its budget will grow and the application process is going to change (for the better).”

“For what it’s worth to you all, this is my dream to be in a position where I can effect change across the broadcasting and media industry. Without overblowing it, I believe Coimisiún na Meán can make a difference. I believe in strong regulation, strong governance, and strong funding. Coimisiún na Meán is about that and over the next few years I hope to prove that to you,” he concluded.



• Dr Rosemary Day, head of media and communication at Mary Immaculate, UL, facilitated a workshop on ideas for community media hubs. Other workshops examined documentary making and AI in broadcasting.



• Three gold awards went to Dublin station Near FM for: value to the community, broadcasting in Irish, and best commissioned programme.

Social Benefits of Community Radio

Six important social benefits are associated with community radio:

1. Individuals, especially minorities and those marginalised, grow in confidence and creativity from directly engaging with a station. It reinforces their sense of belonging.
2. People's employment prospects are enhanced through gaining skills and confidence, reinforcing community identity.
3. Community members are informed and aware of what is happening around their community.
4. Community members are responding more effectively to issues – local to global – because they have access to diverse viewpoints and to more and better information.
5. Community-based organisations are facilitated and reinforced in their capacity to achieve their goals.
6. The community sense of identity and cohesiveness is enhanced through interaction and collective action.



• Eugene Doyle from Community Radio Kilkenny City picks up a Gold Award for Access and Inclusion for an investigative programme titled Jadotville.

HOUSING: Breaking new ground

TRAVELLER-BUILT ACCOMMODATION IS BECOMING A REALITY

BY KATHY MASTERSON



Camp being developed by Cena with family in Boher, Co. Limerick

Galway-based housing body Cena was established in 2019 in response to the lack of culturally appropriate housing for Travellers.

Cena is a Traveller-led organisation that, unlike other housing bodies, fully understands the principles involved in providing suitable accommodation that aligns with the Traveller lifestyle.

Currently there are nine families living in Cena-owned accommodation in Offaly and Carlow, with a further nine families in Galway, Tipperary, Kildare, Sligo, Carlow and Limerick preparing to move into homes that are in the process or purchase or construction.

Cena has also completed eight feasibility studies, with recommendations for the development of group accommodation in South Dublin, Cork, Carlow, Limerick, Dublin City and Clare.

The studies are based on in-depth consultation with Traveller families on their accommodation needs, and recommendations are being actively considered by Cena and local authority officials.

Ensuring self-determination for Travellers, and working to maintain their culture while also providing accommodation of a suitable standard is at the heart of Cena's operations.

Brian Dillon, Cena project development officer, told Changing Ireland: "When we say nothing else has worked, that's not a controversial statement. It's accepted in every single review that it (Traveller accommodation) has been a disaster.

"The very simple argument was, why not let Travellers try to sort that out and build up capacity to do it. So that's what Cena is, it's a Traveller-led board.



• Photo and technical drawings featuring Cena's work in Boher, Co. Limerick. Cena (the word means 'home' in the Traveller language) is an approved housing body working for and with Travellers.

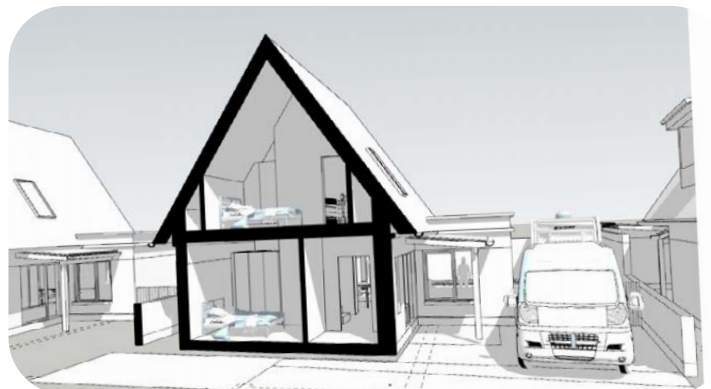
"We have done an awful lot of work and still are. I'd say we're active in about 12,13 counties now. We're engaged in particular on what you call failures of the past. Everywhere you go, you can't find a group housing or a halting site that's actually a success. At least we haven't found it yet.

"We're putting in a CAS (Capital Assistance Scheme) application - that's how we get the money from government. And we're building, we're designing houses, accommodation."

Brian continued: "Travellers have a terrible experience of the needs analysis. If you're living in crisis, the answer is always: 'What do we want next Monday?'. It's not what do I want for my children, my grandchildren, my culture? So we have a very in depth conversation looking at what those are. And they're not the same - this notion that there's some magic solution for all Travellers, it's not the case.

"We're doing it as we go along - area by area, case by case. And then

"They're massively keen to be able to say, 'There's a model, there's a way of doing this. Because they don't know what to do and where to start.'"



• An architect's drawing of the Traveller group housing scheme currently being developed in Ragoon, Co Galway.



Figure 14

“Outdoor living was consistently emphasised by Travellers as something critical to a Traveller’s mode of living.”

(Continued from previous page)

we’re able to make applications to either buy houses, we bought a few houses, we design them with the people, with the families.

“We’ve got trained tenant liaison officers who are all Travellers, and that kind of relationship is absolutely essential, because we put an emphasis on futureproofing as well. So family expansion, all that kind of thing is done from day one and it’s all Traveller to Traveller. Every penny of rent that we get as Cena goes into money for a Traveller home somewhere else.”

OUTDOOR LIVING

Design studies compiled for Cena by Desiun Architects on a family camp in Boher, Co Limerick, and a group housing scheme in Galway City reported that Travellers placed a strong emphasis on outdoor living, and the importance of sheds and outbuildings.

They also preferred single-story dwellings, and open plan interiors, as well as options for outdoor cooking.

The design study stated: “In our consultations with Cena, outdoor living was consistently emphasised by Travellers as something critical to a Traveller’s mode of living. This corresponded with comments such as ‘don’t put me in a box’ and, ‘when I’m indoors I need to see everything around me’. The indoors, particularly the bed spaces, were seen as a temporary moment, a sleeping interlude to an otherwise outdoor life.”

TRESPASSING LAW

Brian’s colleague Breda Harty, who is a Traveller herself, discusses the reasons behind the failure of traditional local authority Traveller accommodation.

“Travellers were brought into

places they don’t want to be. They brought in the Trespassing Law, which was to stop Travellers from going up and down the country. Education - social welfare and social services come if children are not in school. A lot of Travelling children were brought up on the road, they weren’t sent to school.

“They brought in a lot of laws that stopped us from going where we would have lived. Not in houses where they put us now, it’s the only accommodation that they’re offering. They closed us in, hid us. Put walls up around us.”

Hugh Doyle, a fellow Traveller and Cena employee, says that the importance of horses and dogs in Traveller culture is something not often considered when it comes to Traveller accommodation.

“We’ve been assimilated into houses and we’ve lost our horses and dogs. This affects the mental health of a lot of young Travellers. They can’t take horses out on the road, there’s by-laws around it. But it’s actually great for mental health, to be able to go out on a sulky.

“You have a problem now in all the urban areas, where councils want to shove the Travellers. You need a rural setting for horses. This is a big assimilation problem that we have, that it’s kind of a hidden culture. And what’s wrong with two cultures mixing together anyway, the settled community and the Traveller community? There were never any problems years ago.”

RACISTS GAVE BIRTH TO THE TERM ‘RAHOONERY’

Cena’s group housing scheme in Rahoon, Co Galway is of particular significance due to the history of the area. A new word, ‘Rahoonery’, was

added to our vocabulary following anti-Traveller violence and protests in the area in the 1960s after the local authority proposed a serviced halting site for Travellers there.

The word means ‘violently anti-Traveller sentiment and action’, but instead of glossing over this unsavoury event in history, Cena is commissioning an art sculpture next to the houses to recognise it, and how far the community of Rahoon has come.

CENA'S STRUGGLE

Brian reveals that it has been “a struggle” for Cena as “most other approved housing bodies would either have got State support or private or Church support, we didn’t have that and don’t have it”.

“An approved housing body can only fund itself; the model is that it funds itself through rent. We only have about 15-16 tenancies right now, though that will multiply quite quickly from next year on, but to get to that stage, you really have nothing.

“We charge local authorities when they say to us: ‘Can you come in and talk to these families and see what you can do?’. They probably think they’re handing us this poisoned chalice, and certainly it is a dysfunctional space because they’ve already made a mess of it. In doing that, we say yes, we’ll do a report, we’ll do a set of recommendations. We’ll even take it on, we get everybody home to where they want to be homed. And that usually works, but we charge them for that.

“It’s kind of a massive struggle, because the government is more interested in funding something that doesn’t work. And it just pretends that it’s doing something rather than changing it.”

Cena also works closely with other approved housing bodies.

“They’re massively keen to be able to say, ‘There’s a model, there’s a way of doing this’. Because they don’t know what to do and where to start,” noted Brian.

He concluded: “We have all these policies on Traveller ethnicity and housing, and you can judge us by that or judge us on what’s actually happening. The real policy is assimilation, and there needs to be a lot of honesty about that. Has it worked in over 30 years? Who has benefited from that?”

“The settled community haven’t benefited by making ghettos on the edges of cities where Travellers were never really from anyway. Maybe it’s time to recognise that this (Traveller culture) is an asset for Irish society. Tourists coming to Ireland would love to see that.”

€1 MILLION FUNDING BOOST FOR MEN’S SHEDS

A new €1 million fund was launched in November to support the 435 Men’s Sheds around the country.

Under the initiative, the organisations could receive grants of up to €3,000.

The funding is designed to assist Men’s Sheds with day-to-day running costs such as heating, electricity, utility, and insurance bills.

Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys made the announcement at ‘Shedfest’, the National Conference of the Irish Men’s Sheds Association (IMSA), which took place in Virginia, County Cavan on November 20.

Enda Egan, CEO of the Irish Men’s Sheds Association, welcomed the funding and said: “The Men’s Shed movement was hit very hard by the Covid pandemic with weekly attendance numbers falling from 10,000 pre-Covid to approximately 6,000 currently.

“This announcement is a major boost for us in the Irish Men’s Sheds Association to know that this funding can be utilised by sheds to pay for their utility bills throughout this winter and mitigate against the increased cost of running a Men’s Shed. This funding will help greatly towards the sustainability of Ireland’s 435 Men’s Sheds as many continue to struggle to reopen and remain operational post-Covid.”

The world’s first Men’s Shed was established in South Australia in 1993. The movement now operates in 12 countries worldwide, with Ireland opening its first Men’s Shed in Tipperary in 2009. In 2013, President Michael D Higgins became patron to the Irish Men’s Sheds Association.

Minister Humphreys said of Men’s Sheds: “They help tackle isolation and provide a safe, comfortable, and welcoming environment where men of all ages can socialise, share skills, and work on meaningful projects.

“As we enter the winter months, the supports that our Men’s Sheds provide are more important than ever,” she added.



• The kitchen and pool area in Killarney Men’s Shed.

Photo by AM.

16 DAYS

2023 CAMPAIGN FOCUSED ON INITIATIVES AT WORK AND IN HOSPITALS

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an annual global campaign that runs from November 25 (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) until December 10 (Human Rights Day).

This year, Women's Aid ran its annual 16 Days of Action campaign to focus on how domestic abuse impacts women during pregnancy and how employers can lead in addressing domestic abuse as a workplace issue.

On November 24, Women's Aid hosted a webinar as it officially launched a new online resource hub (www.DVatWork.ie) for employers to support the implementation of Statutory Domestic Violence Leave, which commenced on November 27.

Contributors included Ailbhe Smyth, activist, campaigner, and chair of Women's Aid, and Linda O'Sullivan, an advocate and supporter of Women's Aid and a survivor of domestic abuse.

The webinar heard how businesses and organisations "are increasingly becoming aware that domestic violence and abuse is an issue which directly impacts employees' participation at work and the workplace itself".

It also provided information about the supports available to employers to create an understanding and safe workplace environment for victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

HOSPITALS

Also during the 16 Days of Activism 2023, Women's Aid and its partners on the Maternity Project ran an awareness campaign in maternity hospitals and units across the country.

The Maternity Project is a partnership between Women's Aid and four maternity hospitals in Cork and Dublin. The project is devising a training course for midwives, social workers, and obstetricians from the four hospitals and from some regional maternity units.

A dedicated Women's Aid domestic abuse support worker is assigned to the three Dublin maternity hospitals and receives referrals directly from these hospitals.

The project partners have also designed unique pregnancy and domestic abuse resources for use by the hospitals. The three-year project hopes to enhance the maternity hospitals' response to domestic abuse through a jointly-created training, awareness and referral programme.

- BY KATHY MASTERSON

NATIONAL: Fines to triple

Dog wardens thanked as €2m fund announced to support their work in the community

- *Fines for irresponsible dog owners have tripled*
- *New group will examine restricting further dangerous breeds*



• Dogs Trust CEO Suzie Carley and Minister Heather Humphreys.

More funding, a tripling in fines and other measures to enhance dog control were announced by Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys, in November. This comes in response to 300 attacks on people by dogs last year and a near doubling in the number of dogs being taken in by pounds.

In making the announcements, Minister Humphreys thanked dog wardens for their work and acknowledged "the difficult role dog control personnel play in our communities".

Figures released earlier this year by the Department of Rural and Community Development, which is responsible for policy and legislation regarding dog control and dog breeding establishments, revealed:

- More than 300 people were injured during dog attacks last year.
- There was a 95 per cent increase in the number of stray dogs entering pounds, up from 4,165 in 2021 to 7,352 last year.
- 340 dogs were euthanised in 2022, more than double the previous year's figure.

Speaking on November 9, while visiting the national headquarters of the Dogs Trust in Finglas, County Dublin, Minister Humphreys announced a €2 million fund to upgrade local authority dog shelter facilities and vehicles nationwide. She said that a new high-level

stakeholder group will be asked to consider wider issues such as expanding the list of 'restricted breeds'.

"I want to send a strong message to dog owners. If your dog is not controlled you will be fined. And if you own a restricted dog, you must comply with the regulations," she stated.

The Minister also warned dog owners that multiple fines can apply, for example a restricted dog without muzzle, collar or dog licence may attract three separate fines.

She noted that, in Britain, new restrictions are being adopted in relation to dangerous breeds.

"I think it is only appropriate that our own stakeholder group consider the merits of adopting a similar approach here, particularly in light of recent worrying incidents whereby people and livestock have been attacked," she said.

NEW €2M FUND

The establishment of a €2 million fund will enable local authorities to upgrade their dog pounds and shelter facilities, and to move towards cleaner, electric vehicles for dog wardens.

The funding is in response to increased pressures on dog control services with more strays and surrenders entering pounds over the past year.

Two women hospitalised following serious dog attack in Waterford City
The incident occurred around lunchtime on Friday in an area near John's Park

300 people injured in dog attacks
Hounded by vicious pets

This new initiative fulfils a commitment in the Report of the Working Group on Dog Control to support infrastructure improvements.

The Minister looks forward to further collaboration with the housing and agriculture departments as they work to implement "far-reaching" recommendations in a report, published in March, by the Working Group on Dog Control.

- BY ALLEN MEAGHER

Restricted Dogs List

Under the 'Restricted Dogs List' as per The Control of Dogs Regulations, 1998, additional controls apply to the following breeds and type of dog (or strains or crosses of these breeds or type of dogs):

- American Pit Bull Terrier
- Bull Mastiff
- Doberman Pinscher
- English Bull Terrier
- German Shepherd (Alsatian)
- Japanese Akita
- Japanese Tosa
- Rhodesian Ridgeback
- Rottweiler
- Staffordshire Bull Terrier
- Dog of type known as a Ban Dog (or Bandog)

LEITRIM: Communities prove love for pets

Welfare officers armed with scanners are saving pets lives, once they're chipped

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

People have grown used to scanning their own shopping and paying at a self-service till, particularly in Tesco. While useful to retailers, it dehumanises the shopping experience. However, in different hands, scanners are now also used to cure heartache and bring people joy – and we're not talking about medical scans.

Since 2015, animal welfare officers equipped with scanners have used the modern technology to reunite missing pets with their distraught owners.

For owners of loved pets that stray, time is of the essence, as many dog pounds will only keep a stray animal for five days before it is put down. The scanning technology connects pets with their people fast, often beating the literal doggie deadline.

Leitrim Animal Welfare, based in Drumkeerin, Co Leitrim, is set up differently.

"We have a no-kill policy, with just the odd exception, for instance if a dog is sick or has severe behavioural issues," says animal welfare officer Megan Gaffney.

That policy set Leitrim apart when it became the first pound in the State to operate a "no-kill" policy, meaning "no healthy dog in our care is ever put to sleep".

It began its no-kill policy at a time when 18,000 dogs per year were being euthanised by pounds.

As its website says: "It has long been Leitrim Animal Welfare's mission to change this culture of destruction."

Since 2015 there has been a steady, national decline - until last year (when it rose to 340 killed).

HOW IT WORKS

Leitrim Animal Welfare takes in between 300-400 dogs per year and it has huge public support, with 18,000 people following them on Facebook, a significant number given the population of County Leitrim



• Megan Gaffney from Leitrim Animal Welfare promoting responsible dog ownership with fluffy dog 'Chippie'.

PHOTO BY A. MEAGHER.

was 35,199 people in the last census (2022).

As Megan says, "Because we've so many followers on Facebook, if we share a photo of a dog that's come into us, the dog can be quickly reunited with their owner. A friend of a friend might know the dog. Between microchipping and social media, it's really successful."

All dog pounds use scanners and 80% of pounds use social media to help rehoming dogs, according to a report published earlier this year.

Megan explained how it works: "If a dog comes into our pound we scan the microchip, then we go online and contact the owner. Once the dog is microchipped with correct details we can easily reunite owners with their pets. It saves a lot of unnecessary heartache."

By law, all dogs over four months old must have a licence and, since 2015, they must also be microchipped.

Leitrim Animal Welfare use a cuddly toy dog called Chippie to

demonstrate how the scanning works. As Megan demonstrated to *Changing Ireland*, the chip is usually implanted in the shoulder area and, once scanned, the microchipped code shows up on the scanner.

"A lot of people don't know about it, but it's become more common. More dogs than ever before that enter our pound are now microchipped. We have a higher reuniting rate than ever," said Megan.

Microchipping and the associated scanning technology was introduced in Ireland in 2015. Scanning can also be used to track down the owners of dangerous dogs on the loose, once they are microchipped.

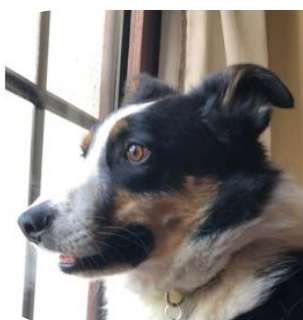
W: <https://leitrimanimalwelfare.weebly.com/>

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

Rules and regulations: <https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/environment/pets-and-wildlife/control-of-dogs/>

Leitrim Animal Welfare has a huge following on Facebook. They use that and dog-scanning to reunite pets with owners.

"It saves a lot of unnecessary heartache," says Megan Gaffney



• Dogs minded by Leitrim Animal Welfare while awaiting new homes.

LEADERSHIP

The Place-Based Leadership Development Programme was created in response to an increase in gang-related activities. It seeks at local level to encourage greater collaboration between residents and people working in the community, such as gardai and HSE and community development workers.

Changing Ireland has closely followed the rollout of the new programme. It first ran in Darndale and Drogheda over 18 months and 42 people (pictured on right) graduated last summer. Which communities will next benefit? Where does the



programme go from here? Time will tell.

Meanwhile, the first evaluation is complete and DEARBHÁIL BUTLER, a community worker with Northside Partnership, writes here about its findings.

Darndale and Drogheda see positive knock-on effects from participating in new programme

BY DEARBHÁIL BUTLER*

The evaluation of the Place-Based Leadership Development Programme (PBLDP) is now complete and it shows the positive impacts for local people.

Emerging changes in both places include: people who didn't communicate before now do so, new groups of people are working together, we have new community events, there are more referrals between agencies, better training provision, more engagement on local projects, new campaigns and small new investments from funding agencies.

Over 18 months, the programme delivered ten modules of leadership development and each of the participants also received six hours of coaching to support their professional development.

The participants were a mix of people, representing local residents, voluntary and community sector organisations and statutory agencies. They shared really positive feedback about their experiences on the programme. They most highly valued their new relationships with people in other agencies and sectors, and learning how those agencies work in practice.

The programme helped to develop their personal and professional skills and knowledge:

It increased their confidence in the value, skills and experience they bring to collaborative working. It also created an increased enthusiasm and hope for local development.

The programme increased participants' knowledge about social issues. They learned about types of crime, exploitation and other issues affecting communities, and how agencies are responding and seeking to prevent crime and social problems.

The participants took time to think and reflect, to engage with others, and to focus on leadership with collaborators.

It improved people's skills to communicate clearly and effectively, including addressing conflict. It built



* Some of the organisers, facilitators and participants involved in the Place-Based Leadership Development Programme pictured with Minister of State Joe O'Brien at the launch of the final report into its first roll-out.

At the beginning of the PBL journey, there was no communication between residents and Gardai - by the end they both had a much deeper understanding of each other's challenges and a mutual respect.

their confidence in questioning and/or disagreeing with others when needed.

As one participant put it (the feedback was given anonymously): "I am becoming a bit more brave having conversations... with different agencies, I didn't have that confidence... but I find from doing place-based leadership, sitting in a room at a table with the guards, Dublin City Council, drug services... I've so much more information now, I wouldn't have got it anywhere else."

The programme helped develop relations between agencies. It connected people and we get more done now.

To give one example of this, the

PBL group met and we wanted to bring the active community volunteers together to celebrate the work that they do in the community. We often reach out to volunteers to ask them to do something, but this time we changed our approach. We all pledged to pick up the phone and personally invite at least one volunteer from Darndale and surrounding areas.

They all turned up and each shared their stories of the great achievements and challenges they see in their communities. From that meeting, support and knowledge was shared between the groups and it really highlighted the power of bringing people together and how positive change can happen.

Some outcomes from that meeting are that the Mens Shed are now connected to the right supports to help them find a new premises. And the Women's Group got support for setting themselves up as a committee, opening bank accounts and applying for funding to develop their group.

Participants find themselves advocating for other agencies. Having learned more about those agencies, they changed their opinions and are now better able to explain the decisions and work of other services locally.

At the beginning of the PBL journey, there was no communication between residents and Gardai - by the end they both had a much deeper understanding of each other's challenges and a mutual respect was formed. Also, residents are now much more confident referring locals to any of the agencies that were involved.

The new relationships among programme participants are helping to accelerate progress by Northside Partnership in Darndale and the Drogheda Implementation Board.

As one participant put it: "Everybody was listened to, there was no one overpowering voice, everybody's ideas were taken on." They said they learned what a leader was: "A leader is not a knower, a leader is somebody who listens and takes on board what other people are saying." They said the programme's impact on them as a person was that it "helped me work better in a group setting and be more aware and listen more to other people".

Many participants said they are just starting the process of putting their learning into practice, and the groups are at the beginning of their journey working together to deliver projects.

* Dearbháil Butler is the Empowering Communities Team Leader with Northside Partnership based in Coolock, Dublin 17. (She also serves on Dublin City Council as a councillor representing Donaghmede).

OECD sees importance of making government and public more aware of social enterprises

Changing Ireland was in Croke Park in 2019 for the launch of the Government's first national National Social Enterprise Policy. Since then, the social enterprise space has broadened and advanced. But how much? What are the challenges?

In the search for someone well-informed, policy-focused and with a grassroots knowledge to provide readers with a report from this year's social enterprise conference, we turned to Philip O'Donnell. Philip works as the Irish Local Development Network's research, policy, and rural affairs officer.

BY PHILIP O'DONNELL

International Social Enterprise Day – November 16 – was marked in Ireland by the fifth annual National Social Enterprise Conference, held in Ballinasloe, Co Galway. Co-hosted by Social Enterprise Republic of Ireland (SERI) and the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD), the hybrid event drew more than 400 in-person and online attendees.

The make-up of the audience – which comprised a mix of practicing social entrepreneurs, representatives of Government and an array of support agencies, academics and international experts – highlighted the growing reach of Ireland's social enterprise sector. It was a day of engaging and thought-provoking discussion.

The morning session saw the launch by visiting OECD delegates of 'Boosting Social Entrepreneurship and Social Enterprise Development in Ireland: An In-depth Review', which charts some of the many achievements under the National Social Enterprise Policy 2019-2022. The OECD's report identified some key priorities for the successor policy, which is due for publication in the spring of 2024. The report situated Ireland's social economy within a long tradition of local co-operatives and labour market

integration initiatives, and notes that, in more recent times, a strong support infrastructure has arisen around our nascent social enterprise sector.

Among the components of that infrastructure are: grassroots supports such as the Local Development Companies; national network bodies such as SERI, The Irish Social Enterprise Network, The Wheel, the Irish Local Development Network; and funding bodies such as Clann Credo, Community Finance Ireland, and Rethink Ireland.

All of these organisations will have taken particular interest in challenges set out in the OECD report. A striking feature of those challenges is the extent to which they remind us that – almost five years on from the commencement of the first National Social Enterprise Policy, and almost two years on from its conclusion – the aims of that policy remain very much a work in progress.

CHALLENGES

For example, the OECD calls attention not only to a lack of shared understanding of the concept of social enterprise among the general public, but also – and far more worryingly – a lack of shared understanding across different levels and branches of government.



• Social enterprise attendees enjoying a cuppa and a chat in Ballinasloe.

Many within the sector see public procurement as being the next frontier for social enterprises to penetrate. However, the limited awareness within wider government of what social enterprises are, what they can deliver, and how they need to be supported, provides cause for concern, and no little frustration.

The need to support social enterprises in becoming more entrepreneurial was another finding highlighted in the OECD report. This theme was picked up in the first of the day's panel discussions, which focused on diversifying trading income within social enterprises.

Panellists Majella Orr of Craoibhin Community Enterprise Centre in Termon, Co Donegal, and John Kearns of Partas, which operates a chain of enterprise centres in Tallaght, Co Dublin, were in firm agreement on the need, in Orr's words, to "think like a business."

Joining them on the panel, Amal Chevreau of the OECD said, "A social enterprise must, first and foremost, be an enterprise. And profit matters, but how you make that profit, and what you do with it, also matters."

Pivoting from the age-old challenge of generating trading income, the second panel discussion focused on the much more

contemporary challenge of leveraging cutting-edge digital technologies – including artificial intelligence (AI) – to serve the social and economic aims of the organisation. Three social entrepreneurs that have managed to do just that took to the stage: Sam Marchetti of Cork-based ConsortiaCo; Patrick Mulvihill of Amicitia in Co Galway, and Pádraic Horan of Jump-A-Grade, based in the University of Limerick.

KEY LEGACY

In attempting to demystify technologies like AI and their role in social enterprises, the panellists converged on a key message: These technologies, as powerful as they are becoming, are a resource to complement human effort and judgement, but they are not a substitute for it.

"It's important to go into manual mode every now and again," said Marchetti. "If you find yourself becoming reliant on ChatGPT to develop content, make sure to take the time to write it manually once in a while."

No doubt some in the room felt deflated on realising that ChatGPT cannot be counted upon as a grant-writer-in-residence. However, there was widespread agreement that the return to "manual" – in-person, humans-around-the-same-table – events like this one is a good thing for the sector.

The many interconnections that link this growing community together are apparent at social enterprise events like these, perhaps more so than at similar events in other domains. There is an eagerness on all sides – government, practitioners, academics, and supporters of various kind – to strengthen those connections further. Perhaps this is the key legacy of the National Social Enterprise Policy 2019-2022, and its most valuable gift to the policy that will follow.



• Staff from the Department of Rural and Community Development with policy analysts from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development at the National Social Enterprise Conference: Anne Simmons (Social Enterprise Unit), Mary Hurley (Secretary General), Fintan O'Brien (Assistant Secretary), John Ryan (Social Enterprise Unit), Amal Chevreau (OECD), Richard Gavin (Social Enterprise Unit), Melis Aslan (OECD) and Rob Nicholson (Head of Rural Strategy and Social Enterprise).

PHOTOS BY JULIEN BEHAL.

PRIDE OF PLACE WINNERS 2023

The 21st annual Pride of Place awards took place in Armagh in November to honour the contributions of individuals and groups dedicated to improving their local neighbourhoods, creating better places to live, work, and socialise.

Pride of Place is an All-Island competition, with local authorities from across the island of Ireland nominating groups that have made a significant impact in enhancing their communities through collective effort. It is Ireland's largest community awards event.

MAIN AWARDS

Population of 0-500: Joint Winners Killeedy Community Projects, Co Limerick and Hollywood, Co Wicklow.

Pop. of 500-1500: Aughnacliffe, Co Longford

Pop. of 1500-4000: The Carndonagh Traders, Co Donegal

Pop. over 4000: We Love Nenagh, Co Tipperary

Communities Welcoming New Communities: Carrigallen GAA Healthy Clubs, Co Leitrim

Creative Place Initiative: Maynooth Access Group, Co Kildare



• Pride of Place award winners pictured in Armagh.

Community Wellbeing Initiative (Targeted): Blayne Blades, Co Monaghan

Community Wellbeing Initiative (Holistic): Banteer Community Groups, Cork City

Community Tourism Initiative: Tourism East Clare

Climate Action and Biodiversity: Creggs Rural Development Company, Co Galway

Community Age Friendly Initiative: Drogheda and District Support 4 Older People, Co Louth

Housing Estates/ Residents Associations: Ballyduff Community

Redevelopment Group, Co Antrim
Islands and Coastal Communities: Coiste Aiseanna na hOige Teo, Co Kerry

CITIES AWARDS

Urban Neighbourhoods under 3,000: Larchville Lisduggan Residents Assn, Waterford

Urban Neighbourhoods over 3,000: Ballyphehane, Cork City
Creative Place Initiative (City): The Liberties Weavers, Dublin
Climate Action & Biodiversity (City): Togher Community Garden,

Cork

Community Youth Led Initiative (City): St John Bosco Youth Centre, Newry

Communities Welcoming New Communities (City): LCC Community Trust, Lisburn

Community Wellbeing Initiative (City): Live Life Wellbeing Enterprises, Lisburn

SPECIAL AWARDS

Maidens of Macha, Co Armagh;
Rylane Community Park Assn, Co Cork;

Stradbally/Vicarstown/Timahoe Activity and Wellness Hub, Co Laois;

ReWild Wicklow;
Common Knowledge 'Rekindle Festival of Lost Skills', Co Clare;
Le Cheile Community Garden, Co Cork;
Swinford Butterfly Garden, Co Mayo

**COUNCIL
COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
AWARD:**
Cork County Council

FEMICIDE

Call for zero tolerance following Puska's conviction for Aisling

Women's Aid welcomed the conviction in November of Jozef Puska for the murder of Ashling Murphy in Tullamore, Co Offaly, on January 12 last year.

It said the "deep social resonance" of Ashling's murder should spur us on "in all aspects of Irish society, to do the work required to achieve equality and safety for all, to make Ireland a country that truly has zero tolerance for domestic, sexual and gender-based violence - now and for our future generations."

Sarah Benson, CEO, Women's Aid, said in a statement:

"When Puska senselessly took Ashling Murphy's life at 4.30pm in broad daylight while she was out on a run, it sent a shockwave through communities in Ireland. That this could happen tapped into a visceral



feeling that so many girls and women are socialised to feel - that the risk of male violence is everywhere, that nowhere is safe."

She noted, "One man goes to jail today, but this will not bring Ashling back or compensate for her heart-rending loss."

Ms Benson added that "effective criminal justice sanctions are vital" and Women's Aid truly hopes that

Puska's conviction "offers some measure of justice and closure to Ashling's family and friends".

The murder of Ashling was "a shocking example of dangers posed to women", she continued. The case put a spotlight on male violence and the need for women to be safe at home and in their communities. Since 1996 Women's Aid has been recording the violent deaths of

women in Ireland, during which time 263 lives have been lost due to violence and abuse.

"Each woman killed violently is an outrage," added Ms Benson. "An absolute tragic loss of life resulting in utter heartache and trauma for those left behind. 263 women whose voices have been silenced through violence, and whose boundless potential was robbed of them and their loved ones."

Prevention of such violence is "crucial," she said, urging society at large to have zero tolerance for domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.

**To contact the Women's Aid
24hr National Freephone Helpline,
ring: 1800 341 900.**

W: www.womensaid.ie

Regenerative development

By tapping into the story of place we can develop the places we love

BY CIARA MOYNIHAN*

There was a time in Ireland, not too long ago, where every stone, wall, patch of nettles, cuckoo's nest, barn owl, fox or badger's den, and hidden old drinking well was known and probably had a name. At that time, we cared for our land and our community in a way that very few people seem to today. The two were one of the same, caring for the land was caring for the community and vice versa.

Are there ways to restore our relationship to the land and water that don't require a time machine?

Yes, there are. The one I am most familiar with is through regenerative design and development, which I studied with the Regenes Institute for Regenerative Practice. (Headquartered in New Mexico, USA, it says it has 800 practitioners actively promoting regenerative development in over 30 countries – Ed).

Regenerative development means designing our villages, towns, cities, institutions, businesses, and communities in such a way that our human activities are in alignment with the ecological systems that support all life on earth. It means the earth's resources can sustain themselves and grow in diversity and abundance. As well as soil, water, air, woodland, minerals and so on, Earth's resources also include social relationships, cultural heritage, and traditional knowledge systems.

Regenerative development starts from the belief that each place is unique and gets us to enter into a dialogue with that uniqueness, starting with people from the community. To begin, we need to establish the story of a place, and local people know this story at a deep level. Questions worth asking include: Why do you like living here? What is it about this place that is special to you?

Gradually, the story emerges, drawing on history, local culture, landmarks, geology, folklore, music, traditions, etc. With support from a facilitator or regenerative practitioner, community aspirations can be set and development projects begin on common ground.

By creating a story of place, we begin to see how a place has evolved throughout time. There is usually a common theme, e.g. a place of learning, pilgrimage, retreat or wellness, battle or conflict,



• An artist's rendition of Lisdoonvarna's main street.

What is Regenerative Development?

Regenerative Development is designing our built environment, systems, organisations and communities to improve the wellbeing of people and nature in connection with the places they live. It is used by practitioners in landscape architecture, building design, infrastructure planning, catchment area management, organisational development and more.



• In total, 150 people took part in workshops to reimagine Lisdoonvarna.

Town Centre First Policy

*The **Town Centre First Policy** is central to the Government's Our Rural Future strategy and it aims to make town centres viable, vibrant and attractive places for people to live, work and visit. **More info:** <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/473d3-town-centre-first-policy/>

Useful links

<https://architecturefoundation.ie/news/hometown-architect-projects-2023/>

<https://reimagineplace.ie/fieldwork/reimagine-lisdoonvarna/>

<https://www.regenerat.es/about/>

peace-making, nobility, etc. The theme falls out of the landscape and how people have lived there over thousands of years. When a development project is aligned with this theme, or honours and pays respect to it, we can be confident that it will live up to the aspirations of a community long after the project initiators or developer has gone.

There are many examples of this type of work across the world. Here in Ireland, the Reimagine Lisdoonvarna Project is one of five projects chosen nationally as part of what's called the Reimagine Hometown Architect initiative. Launched last March, it supports community groups to partner with an architect on a regeneration project that aligns with the Government's Town Centre First Policy*.

Lisdoonvarna native Shelley McNamara of Grafton Architects connected with Accelerating Change Together (ACT - a Mayo-based social enterprise of architects, urbanists and policy specialists) and a local social enterprise called the Common Knowledge Centre. Together they facilitated a series of public workshops titled 'Tapping the Well'; over 100 people attended the first workshop in June. The aim is to see how Lisdoonvarna's wellbeing heritage can be a key to future development and to restoring pride of place.

Until recent years, Lisdoonvarna's spas and well were treasured nationally as a place for healing, and it will be exciting to see how Lisdoonvarna realigns itself with this heritage in the coming years as a result of connecting with its story of place.

It is a good example of how regenerative development can offer a hopeful and practical way forward in a complex and chaotic time in our lives.

*Ciara Moynihan, currently living in Co Clare, is a regenerative practitioner and organisational development consultant, working for the last five years in New Zealand on government and community projects. Ciara has a keen interest in the role of place as a leverage point for transformative change in communities and ecosystems.

Barriers to community development are “undermining transformative change”

BY SIOBHÁN
MEHIGAN



Community action and systemic change is required for a just transition while tackling climate change, delegates at a conference in Rialto’s F2 centre in Dublin were told on November 5. The community workers and academics at Community Workers Ireland (CWI)’s event were enthusiastic and eager to learn more about how best to ramp up climate justice activity in their communities and organisations.

Opening the event, **Joe O’Brien**, Minister of State for Community Development, agreed that “the principles of climate justice should be included in all climate actions”. He detailed work under the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP), the Public Participation Networks (PPNs) and by Community Services Projects (CSPs). He said these programmes are leading the way in community-based climate justice action.

The Minister noted in particular the importance of local authorities

The Minister again emphasised the role of the PPNs in ensuring that community voices had a route to influence policy at a local level.

engaging in meaningful consultations with communities on climate issues, and he again emphasised the role of the PPNs in ensuring that community voices had a route to influence policy at a local level.

On November 21, Minister O’Brien attended another climate action event highlighting the role of the community and voluntary sector in relation to Ireland’s Climate Action Plan.

Held at Dublin Castle and organised by the Department of Rural and Community Development, it showcased projects supported through the Department’s programmes and initiatives that address climate action – LEADER, SICAP, the CSP, PPNs, Tidy Towns, Islands Policy and community volunteers.

The contributions of the other speakers highlighted the need for a strong community sector to animate community-based climate action.

Niall Crowley, former head of the Equality Authority, published a book last year titled ‘Civil Society for Equality and Environmental Sustainability: Reimagining a Force for Change’. It identifies what needs to change in order for society to tackle climate change.

In his speech, Niall said that some inequalities were getting worse, some were unchanging and progress on others was moving “at a glacial pace”. This is relevant because, as he pointed out, climate change “is actually moving at great speed”.

ROBUST CIVIL SOCIETY IS VITAL

He elaborated on how a creative, robust and innovative civil society and a community development sector are vital to support a civil society that can be a force for change.

He described the internal and external barriers that hold back the community development sector, “undermining efforts towards transformative change”. He pointed to barriers such as inflexible funding, prescriptive funding programmes, and bureaucracy that is “strangling” the community development sector from animating innovative climate change projects that allow for a just transition.

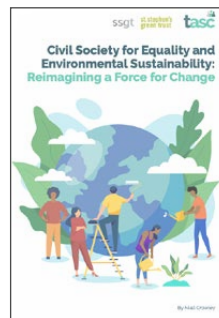
Niall does have hope in overcoming these problems. He encourages the community



• *Speakers at the Climate Justice event in Rialto on November 8: Ann Irwin, Minister Joe O’Brien, Caoimhe Kerins, Ciara Bradley, and Niall Crowley.*
PHOTO COURTESY OF COMMUNITY WORK IRELAND.

development sector to build up skills and capacity – through what he terms ‘association power’ – so it can support a community-based just transition. Through mobilising the sector and the communities we work with, a stronger, coherent and confident sector can become a powerful force to drive community-based climate action.

He called for the development of more platforms for building power locally and nationally to ensure effective participation and communication of the work being done.



• *Niall Crowley’s book was published by Tasc (free at tasc.ie)*

COURAGEOUS

Anastasia Crickley, who has been a voice of leadership and action within the community development sector in Ireland for many years, also spoke of the need for a strong community development sector as core to community-based climate justice action.

Anastasia advocates for “courageous community work, not compromised community work” and she highlighted examples of courageous, community-based campaigns such as ‘Shell to Sea’ in Mayo, and ‘Love Leitrim’ which successfully resisted fracking.

She highlighted the need for community work practice to focus on “marginalised, minority and migrant groups” to ensure a just transition. Participation in decision-making at all levels is needed to ensure changes in policy and thinking. This was stated by several speakers, but emphasised particularly by Anastasia. She pointed to communities as “contested differential spaces” and





• Teacher Maura Harrington and fisherman Pat O'Donnell were Erris locals who joined the Shell to Sea campaign. At the time this photo was taken, Maura was on hunger strike, a British navy ship was anchored offshore and Pat was soon to be imprisoned. PHOTO - ALLEN MEAGHER.



• Pat O'Donnell is brought home from prison. Changing Ireland interviewed him while in Castlereagh. PHOTO BY INDYMEDIA.

Anastasia highlighted examples of courageous, community-based campaigns such as 'Shell to Sea' in Mayo, and 'Love Leitrim' which successfully resisted fracking.

(Continued from previous page)

said that a one-size-fits-all national policy will not support community-based climate action.

STRONG POSITION

Paul Rogers, CEO of Northside Partnership, speaking on behalf of the Irish Local Development Network, said the country's 49 local development company (LDCs) were in a strong position to act on climate justice. He described the work of LDCs in addressing poverty and disadvantage, saying it was significantly impacted by climate change.

He gave examples of community-based climate projects supported by LDCs, such as the recently launched (see Issue 81, Spring 2023) 'Retrofit Ready' initiative that aims to remove barriers to retrofitting in the north-west and border region.

He pointed to the success of the 'Wild Work' project in East Cork and work by other local development companies in raising awareness, supporting biodiversity and habitat restoration and in community energy.

He pointed out that the structure and funding of local development companies at present, where they are "moving to become market style organisations", having to tender and bid for public-funded contracts, is limiting the community development approach and collaborative work. This can be overcome he states through (a) greater funding for LDCs, and (b) through supporting

more ambitious and innovative thinking and community work.

Collette McEntee and Vanessa Conroe from the campaigning group 'Feminist Communities for Climate Justice' spoke about their work and collaborations between the National Women's Council of Ireland and CWI. They passionately emphasised that system change was required to tackle climate change and that all policy should be climate policy.

"Climate crisis is an everything crisis" was repeatedly emphasised and they spoke about how care work, transport, housing, health and other sectors were being impacted by climate change. They said a community work approach was vital to tackling climate change.

TRAVELLERS CULTURE FOCUSED ON RECYCLING

Contributions from Pavee Point highlighted work done within the Traveller and Roma Community to introduce climate action into community work with existing projects.

Nancy Collins and Winnie McDonagh pointed out that the culture within the Traveller community was always to recycle, upcycle and reuse existing materials. Now, the community is among those most impacted by climate change. They spoke about participative

action to protect Traveller and Roma communities against the worst impacts.

Caomhe Kerins of City of Dublin ETB rounded off the formalities of the conference by describing the ETB's experiences when introducing climate justice actions to their work. They have written and published a guide titled 'Climate Justice Education in Practice Tutor Handbook' to support educators and community workers in developing public awareness on a just transition.

Speaking at the end of the event, **Ann Irwin** of CWI spoke about "upskilling and raising consciousness amongst community workers". Encouraging people to get involved at a policy level, she appealed to community workers to sign up as members of CWI. New people are welcome to become involved in the organisation's longstanding climate justice working group.

The challenges in tackling climate change are undoubtedly real and there was immense energy amongst delegates to support a just transition and community-based climate action in their own communities and organisations.

Resources are available through the programmes already in place and the sector is campaigning hard for the necessary changes, funding and support to expand.

3 GUIDES FOR COMMUNITY WORKERS

The following three useful guides are available to download for free from Community Work Ireland's website.

W: <https://www.cwi.ie/>

1

PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS DUTY: A GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY WORKERS



Community Work Ireland

AIEB

2

CLIMATE ACTION AND CLIMATE JUSTICE: A GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY WORKERS



Community Work Ireland

AIEB

3

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE: A GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY WORKERS



Community Work Ireland

ENGAGING: Civic Forum 2023

Those with power should smile more

- *And, importantly, there are no shortcuts when it comes to community development*
- *Ideas for inclusive engagement from community sector representatives*

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

The Secretary General from the Department of Rural and Community Development was smiling. The head of Pobal – M.C. for the day – was smiling. The Ministers were smiling, although given their positions they should flash the fíacla more often.

They all obviously got the missive from Ann Irwin of Community Work Ireland, who with colleague Rachel Doyle has been facilitating training workshops up and down the country to encourage collaboration between state bodies and communities.

Her advice to those with more power than others is to smile, and the more power you have, the more you should smile - to put people at their ease and encourage engagement.

She was speaking at what has become an annual event - the second National Civic Forum for dialogue between the state and the community and voluntary sector.

Paschal Donohoe, Minister for Public Expenditure, and Joe O'Brien, Minister of State for Community Development, officially opened the event at the Aviva, Dublin, on November 15.

Minister Donohoe saw the Forum as an opportunity for "open and frank" discussions on how to work better together "to deliver the best outcomes for all".

The 150 attendees heard examples from speakers showing how the state and the sector have already or can collaborate, including on:

- The Health Dialogue Forum.
- The National Youth Assembly on Climate.
- The development of a new National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy.

Martin Collins of Pavee Point said dialogue between the State and the community and voluntary sector needs to address institutional racism and racism on the streets. He added that the State needs help collaborating – more resourcing, a point echoed by many speakers.

Delegates also received updates on the third national Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Strategy from Orla O'Connor, CEO of the National Women's Council of Ireland, and Mary McDermott, CEO of Safe Ireland.

The Forum heard about inclusive engagement at local level through Public Participation Networks (PPNs) from Ciara Bates (Dept of Rural and Community Development) and Charles Stanley-Smith (Tipperary PPN).



• Anna Shakespeare, Pobal CEO; Mary Hurley, secretary general, Dept of Rural and Community Development; Minister Paschal Donohoe; and Minister of State Joe O'Brien.

PHOTO COURTESY DRCD.

From Wicklow, Niamh Wogan of Bray FRC and Deirdre Whitfield from Wicklow County Council, presented their findings from a local engagement project supported through the Dormant Accounts Fund.

The day focused on a short but important document that was co-written by the sector and government last year: 'Values and Principles for Collaboration and Partnership Working with the Community and Voluntary Sector'.

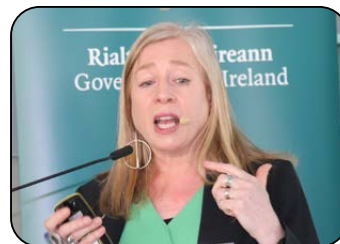
The document provides the framework for a new model of engagement and is being promoted within government by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

Minister O'Brien said: "I consistently reiterate that the best decisions are the ones we make together." He spoke about the importance of "flexibility and dynamism" in the processes.

"We all have much to learn from each other and we must all be open to adapt," he added.

"Using the Values and Principles (document) together with the tools that have been co-created with the sector, will support more meaningful consultation, inclusion and participation of communities, particularly disadvantaged communities."

He hoped to hear ideas "on how we can further embed the Values and Principles into everything we do".



• Ann Irwin talked about the value of engaging with a smile.

NO SHORTCUTS

Giving her keynote speech, Ann Irwin, fresh from 15 workshops to promote 'A Guide for Inclusive Community Engagement in Local Planning and Decision Making' (launched in February)* echoed earlier speakers in naming resourcing as an issue.

Having listened to members of Local Community Development Committees across the country, she said: "The guide was well received, but there were huge concerns about resources and skills. They said to us, 'If you want us to do consultations that are genuine, you have to resource us'. Those resources have to be viewed as an investment."

"Why inclusive community engagement? Why now?" she asked. "There was demand for a practical guide and, in any case, marginalised communities have a right to be involved in the decisions and the strategies that affect them."

"In addition, it produces better

policy, strengthens democracy, builds trust and avoids waste."

There are nine principles for engaging with marginalised communities. Ann highlighted three: You have to be genuine. It has to be fit-for-purpose. It has to be accountable.

"However, there's no shortcut when it comes to community development. Where a community development infrastructure exists, then the conditions for marginalised communities to engage are already there. Community development provides a bridge into communities. Where it doesn't exist, engagement is difficult."

DRINK MORE TEA

And why smile?

"When you're in a room be aware of power," said Ann. "The more power you have the bigger the smile that should be on your face. We've all been in those places where somebody is po-faced. Smile! Engage with people. Make people comfortable."

"Deformalise spaces. Use humour. You can have robust discussions, but you can also be humorous and have a cup of tea afterwards. That's really important, particularly to make people from marginalised communities comfortable that they can engage," she said.

* To download the guide, visit: gov.ie

COLLABORATING: Civic Forum 2023

Bringing Values and Principles to life at the Aviva, Nov 15



• Eileen Leahy from the Dept. of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth making a joint presentation with Renagh Hayden, manager of the National Participation Office.



• Anastasia Crickley from Maynooth University.

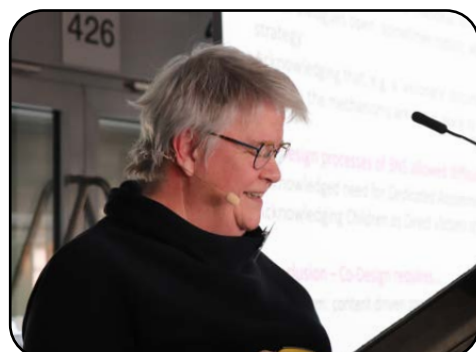
PHOTOS BY ALLEN MEAGHER.



• Rachel Doyle, Community Work Ireland.



• Student Vanessa Paszkowska, who volunteers with Migrant Rights Centre Ireland and works with Pavee Point, and Simone Sav, manager of Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Public Participation Network.



• Mary McDermott, CEO, Safe Ireland, speaking at the Aviva.



• Charles Stanley-Smith, a member of the secretariat of Tipperary Public Participation Network.



• Damien Walshe, CEO of the Independent Living Movement Ireland.

CORK: Enterprise Awards

Award-winning self-employed Corkonians hope to compete for national title in 2024

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

There is no sense in stigmatising people because they are from a particular area, according to the chairperson of Cork City Partnership, Kenneth Collins. He was speaking to Changing Ireland at an awards night on October 19 for people who started their own businesses with support from the Back To Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) scheme.

Similar awards nights are taking place across the country and they will culminate in regional and national awards in early 2024.

We dropped into the Imperial Hotel, Cork, moments before Cork City Partnership announced the winners of its 2023 awards night to speak to some of those involved.

ORDINARY PEOPLE FROM ORDINARY BACKGROUNDS

Kenneth Collins (a city councillor since 2014) is from Gurranabraher, and he loathes the stigmatisation people from Cork's northside are made to experience.

"You've people from Knocknaheeny who represent our country, such as (soccer player) Denise O'Sullivan who is a very proud Knocknaheeny lady. Amy O'Connor captained Cork recently (camogie). John Goulding, who set up a company called Work Vevo which he recently sold to Zoom. And there's Jason O'Gorman (artist), one of the best designers in the country who is from Knocknaheeny."

He welcomed the awards which were "for ordinary people from ordinary backgrounds" who are striving to establish businesses "and they're being celebrated".

"(Some) come from areas of Cork that would be excluded – poverty-stricken areas – and stigmatised. He said the awards highlight about the value of the BTWEA across the country to people from areas "that are excluded, or are poverty-stricken, or stigmatised."

320 NEW BUSINESSES IN CORK

Kenneth pointed out that over the past five years, Cork City Partnership has assisted 320 people to start their own businesses. The awards help to highlight their successes and promote their businesses and show the areas



• Tony O'Regan, enterprise officer with Cork City Partnership (CCP), Bernadette Tuite, who won this year's CCP Enterprise Award and Carmen Ichim, CCP's senior development officer.

Photo by Andy Gibson.

"I was unemployed and struggling to get a job and I thought of photography as a business."



• Andy Gibson.
Photo by A. Meagher.

"I went to Cork City Partnership and, here I am, eleven years later, taking the pictures of tonight's award winners."
- Andy Gibson

they come from in a positive light.

Across the country, thousands of people are supported every year by 49 Local Development Companies (LDCs) funded through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) and backed by the Department of Social Protection. The LDCs provide the enterprise supports and training for people to explore the viability of their self-employment business ideas.

PHOTOGRAPHER APPLAUDS SCHEME

In Cork, there were 12 individual and three social enterprise nominees represented at the awards. Andy Gibson was the photographer covering the event and as a former beneficiary of the BTWEA scheme he is proof of its enduring success.

"I was unemployed for a while and was struggling to get a job and I thought of photography as a business," he said. "I went to Tony (O'Regan) in Cork City Partnership and here I am, 11 years later, taking the pictures of tonight's award nominees and winners."

ACHIEVING THEIR DREAM

CCP enterprise officer Tony O'Regan said it was about making dreams come true. He explained:

"Along with our collaborative partners, we assist people to achieve their dream of starting their own business."

"The awards help to demonstrate the work of Cork City Partnership and the positive impact that SICAP has on the daily lives of individuals and communities in Cork City," he added.

GETTING OVER THE LINE

Yvonne Quilligan now works on Cork City Partnership's Empowering Communities programme. She previously served as an enterprise officer working with people who wanted to set up their own business but needed support.

"People come to you. You make them feel relaxed, they develop a business plan and then we tease it out."

"When people get past the line and actually qualify for the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) support, it's the best feeling ever. There's a lot of work in between - it could take a couple of weeks or months," she said.

PREVIOUS WINNER

Sharon McDermott won the overall CCP award in 2018 and was the guest speaker for the 2023 awards.

CORK: Enterprise Awards

(Continued from previous page)

She described the “incredible support” she received for her children’s clothing business from the Back To Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme through Cork City Partnership.

“Kykykids started off as a wholesale business and during Covid it turned into an online children’s boutique (Kykykids.com),” she said.

She represented Munster in the national enterprise awards.

“It opened loads of doors. It put my name out there,” she said.

She would encourage anyone with a business idea to check out the BTWEA with their local development company.

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE SHOWCASE

Deaf Enterprises, based in Ballinlough, Cork, recently took on five new employees and is expanding its services. It was one of the three social enterprises showcased at the awards night. As manager Steve Flint said, “This is very special – to be nominated is superb.”



• Steve Flint.
Photo by A. Meagher.

“I’ve always maintained we’re a team. For me, tonight is a recognition of the team. We’ve worked together, we’ve been through some hard times and we’re now pushing forward in a new direction. It’s a recognition of the fact that people value what we do and we are very much part of the community,” he added.

2023 AWARD WINNERS

The social enterprise award was ultimately won by Churchfield Community Trust led by Paul O’Donnell and team. The other award winners were:

Robert Hughes of RT Autos, based in Blackstonebridge on the city’s northside, won the substantial growth award;

Coffee Scape, represented by Inka Malesevic and Jacob Al-Laham, won the emerging new business award;

Ceramic artist Bernadette Tuite (bernadettetuite.com) won the innovation and environmental category award and also the overall 2023 CCP Enterprise Award. She plans to invest her award grant in developing an e-commerce element to her website to enable her to sell directly to the public.



• Sharon McDermott of KyKyKids speaking at CCP's Enterprise Awards.
Photo by Andy Gibson.



• Robert Hughes of RT Autos, winner of the Sustainability and Growth Award presented by Ken Collins, chairperson of Cork City Partnership.
Photo by Andy Gibson.



• Videos featuring nominees for the CCP Enterprise Awards are now on Youtube at: <https://www.youtube.com/@CorkCityPartnership/videos>



ROLL ON 2100 3 DEGREES WARMER

I was recently interviewed on Faraway FM Community Radio.

They said it was amazing I had gone so faraway and learned nothing. The cheek of them. I only choose Dubai after I asked a Cork friend: “Do you think I should go on holidays?”

He replied, “Do boy!”. So I did.

Admittedly, I got lucky staying for free in the Burj Khalifa as an independent United Nations observer at COP 28. There was a rigorous application process. The big question the UN asked me was: “Do you know much about COP 27?”

I thought they were referring to the number of Gardai on the streets of Dublin, so I said I knew a lot about it and that Dublin was heating up. They liked that.

I am a climate optimist. Every cloud – and there are many more of them nowadays – has a silver lining. If Ireland is getting three degrees warmer by the end of this century, let's go with the flow. There will be no need to go on hols to Spain anymore. We'll grow wine instead of potatoes, take siestas every day and save on heating.

Faraway FM asked did I travel to Dubai by boat, bicycle and/or camel? Good question.

I flew first class and brought my bike with me. But, I couldn't cycle in the heat. It tyres you.

Faraway FM also asked: Was it true that oil giants struck deals at COP 28?

Of course they did. That's what Mary Robinson said would happen and she's oil ways right.

ABOUT HORACE:

A former civil servant, community worker and agony uncle, Horace is utterly solutions-focused and has been writing for ‘Changing Ireland’ since he was a nipper.

He has addressed everything from world poverty to the price of ice-lollies in Japan.

A few of his better columns are available on our website.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN THE COMMUNITY

IF FOUR BECAME SIX, THEN SIX CAN BECOME NINE

In 2018, only four of Wexford's councillors were women. Today, there are six and Wexford Women's Coalition is working to increase the number. It has joined with See Her Elected (SHE) which encourages women from rural areas to engage in local politics.

The groups are visiting secondary schools in County Wexford as part of a political education roadshow to encourage diversity in county council chambers. During the visits, SHE gives presentations, while members of the Wexford Women's Coalition share their experiences of day-to-day life as county councillors. The Coalition says there is "a major difficulty with an under-representation of women in local politics in rural Ireland".



While the roadshows are new, the campaign is long-running. In 2018, we reported on work by Wexford Local Development to encourage more women to take on leadership roles in local communities and to stand for election.



EUROPEAN LIBRARIANS

24 librarians from across the EU visited Ireland in October as guests of the Local Government Management Agency.

Stuart Hamilton explained our new Public Library strategy. Liz Corry from Tallaght Library gave a presentation on 'Think Big Space' and Maedhbh Rogan-McGann from Meath Libraries spoke about loaning out laptops. The visitors saw The Lexicon in Dun Laoghaire, the Museum of Literature in Ireland and, of course, the Book of Kells.

SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART

Creative Places Ballaghaderreen, a one-year research and development arts project was formally launched in November. It is guided by inclusive community principles. It will use socially engaged art practices to explore how local businesses, community groups and individuals can develop an inclusive, sustainable arts programme for the local area.

COMMUNICATION BOARDS FOR DUBLIN PLAYGROUNDS

The first of Dublin City Council's new communication boards was recently unveiled. The local authority is installing the boards in all its playgrounds over the coming months, as part of a three-year plan for Dublin to become an autism-friendly city.

Communication boards are of particular benefit to children or adults who are either pre-verbal or non-verbal and/or have communication difficulties.

The communication board are designed by a charity called 'Finding Charlie's Voice'.



CORK TO RUN 'ARTS AND CHATS' FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE ISOLATED

Cork County Council's 'Arts and Chats' is a new initiative that will offer people experiencing social isolation the opportunity to discover new hobbies and meet new people.

It follows a social prescribing model which recognises that health is heavily determined by social factors such as poverty, isolation and loneliness. Healthcare professionals refer people to local non-medical services to help improve a person's wellbeing.*

'Arts and Chats' will run workshops for social prescribing networks through the Council's library branches. The participants will take part in a creative activity, from printmaking and drawing to ukelele playing or singing.

* See our summer edition for Kathy Masterson's feature which neatly explains social prescribing.



BOYNE VALLEY GREENWAY

Meath County Council has officially opened the next section of the Boyne Valley to Lakelands Greenway between Nobber and Kilmainhamwood. The development provides an 8.7km walking and cycle path commencing in Castletown and finishing just north of Kilmainhamwood.

Eventually, Meath will have 30kms of walking and cycle routes between Navan and Kingscourt.

HAVE YOUR SAY ON CLIMATE ACTION PLANS

Local authorities have prepared Draft Climate Action Plans for 2024-2029. Many of these plans are currently open for public consultation and are available to view at Council offices around the country, or in county libraries.

Ireland aims to transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy by the end of 2050.

WATERFORD HAS €50K GRANTS FOR CLIMATE ACTION

Waterford City and County Council is looking for community groups who would like to carry out local climate action projects.

Through the Community Climate Action Programme, it wants to support small and large, rural and urban communities to take climate action at a local level. It will help communities to actively shape their transition to a low carbon and sustainable community.

Funding is available for 100% of the project and communities can apply for up to €20,000, €50,000 or €100,000. Projects should address the themes of energy, travel, food and waste, shopping and recycling, and local climate and environmental action.

More info: waterfordcouncil.ie

