



The Forum

Contents

Newsletter for Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Community Forum

Page Two

- » **Caroline Casey**
"Speak Your Piece
- A Review"

Page Three

- » **P+L+U+S**

Page Five

- » **Monkstown
Ringroad**
- » **Voters Make
Things Happen**

Page Six

- » **Clann Credo**
- » **Education Grant
Assistance**

County Development Board Action Plan 2006-2008



Chairman, Dun Laoghaire County Council Councillor, Eugene Regan; Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government Dick Roche and Chairman, County Development Board, Aidan Culhane.

The new three-year cycle for the development of the County was officially marked by the recent launch of the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Board Action Plan 2006-2008. Mr Dick Roche TD, Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, launched the plan. The Minister was welcomed to the County Hall by Mr Owen P Keegan, County Manager.

The new plan, which will support the Social, Economic and Cultural Development of the County, is the result of an intense consultation process with the relevant agencies and key stakeholders in the County.

Praising the work of all the members of the County Development Board, the Minister said:

"The extensive consultations undertaken as part of the review has resulted in a comprehensive analysis of your achievements together with an Action Plan identifying priorities for the next three years".

In the introduction to the new Action Plan, CDB Chairperson Councillor Aidan Culhane informed us of its background.

"The Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Board was established in April 2000. It is a partnership of local government, local development bodies, representatives of state agencies

and the social partners, including the community and voluntary sector.

After an intense period of consultation and conceptualisation, the Board progressed its objectives and, in June 2002, launched and published its strategy titled "An Integrated Strategy for Social, Economic and Cultural Development 2002-2012".

With the groundwork done, the Board's next step was to prepare a supporting framework from which to deliver on that shared vision. Through co-operation with numerous bodies the Board devised and published a Strategy Implementation Plan, which covered the period 2003-2005 inclusive.

The Board's principal responsibilities are:

- To derive a shared vision for the long-term social, economic and cultural development of the County
- To prepare a supporting strategy from which to deliver on that shared vision
- To ensure an effective framework for the monitoring, review and adjustment of the strategy
- To encourage and promote on an on-going basis the co-ordination of activities of member organizations and affiliates of the County Development Board.

From the outset it was anticipated that the Strategy would be reviewed. In line with this, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government decided that each Board should carry out a review of its Strategy in 2005. Ministerial guidelines envisaged that the review would not fundamentally change the overall Strategy.

The review commenced in February 2005 and again following an intensive period of consultation and engagement with over 50 public and publicly funded bodies, the Board adopted in December 2005 a new Action Plan 2006-2008.

Significantly, the number of actions in the new plan represent about one third of the number included in the initial plan. This relatively limited number of actions will allow for greater focus on areas of priority identified by the Board during the course of the review. Timescales and targets/indicators have been set out in the plan and a programme of tracking, monitoring and reviewing is in place to ensure that actions are delivered so that ultimately the Board's vision for the County is realised."

Cllr. Eugene Regan, Cathaoirleach of the Council, noted the positive role played by the Community and Voluntary Forum in the development of the plan. He committed himself to supporting the work of the Forum and that of the Board.

Cllr. Aidan Culhane, Board Chairperson, outlined the key priorities that will be pursued over the next three years. He referred to the role of the County Community and Voluntary Forum in the implementation of the plan, and acknowledged the importance of providing a walk-in Volunteer Centre for the County, which is being spearheaded by the Forum.

After the launch the Minister took time out from his busy schedule to chat with members of the Board. He specifically thanked the Community and Voluntary Forum representatives for their contribution to the work of the Board, their civic spirit and critical involvement in the promotion of community development.

The Forum is lead agency in an important Strategic Objective under the Social Development Strand: Action B1.3.2 "Volunteer Support". We will be reporting on progress under this heading in our next edition.



Members of the Forum Working Group at the launch of the new strategy: John Nolan (Treasurer), Damien O Sullivan (Chair), Minister Dick Roche, Abraham Wahid, Willie Morton (Development Officer) with Mary Collins (Vice Chair).

“SPEAK YOUR PIECE” A Review

As promised in our last edition, we are reviewing DLRCC's Social Inclusion Week's headline event, **“Speak Your Piece!”** a lecture by Caroline Casey, founder of the Aisling Foundation and chairperson of the O2 Ability Awards.

This initiative was sponsored by Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council's Equality and Training Section as part of the local authority's Social Inclusion Week programme. The 2006 programme focused on the theme of *“communication made easy”* and Caroline touched on this subject throughout her address. She highlighted the importance of speaking openly and frankly about disability and encouraged attendees to resist judging those who appear outwardly 'different'.

The audience at the event ranged from members of staff from the County Council and other agencies and organisations working in the area, members of the community and representatives from the County Community & Voluntary Forum.

Of particular interest to the audience were anecdotes from Caroline's trip around the world using eighty different modes of transport. Four years ago, the “Around the World in 80 Ways” team (Caroline Casey, Mike McKenzie, and Miles Hilton Barber) were challenged to depart London on 2 September and to return by 3 December after circumnavigating the globe. Caroline's adventure was part of a bid to raise funds for charity and demonstrate the exceptional ability and confidence of the team, each of whom had a disability. Modes of transport ranged from dragon boat to hot air balloon to racecars to elephants, the preferred mode of transport during their trip across India.

Time was made available at the end of the event for questions from the audience, which ranged from the serious, such as how Caroline handled occasions where she experienced discrimination, to the humorous, such as *“how does someone with a visual impairment go shopping?”*

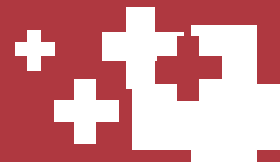
For further information on Caroline's charity, the Aisling Foundation, or the 80 Ways Adventure programme, please access the following websites:

www.aroundtheworldineightyways.com

www.theaislingfoundation.org



If you attended this talk or any of the Social Inclusion Week 2006 events, thank you for your support, and we would welcome your comments or suggestions for next years' Social Inclusion Week programme!



REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS SUPPORT



Abraham Wahid tells us about the PLUS organisation, winners of one of the Young Citizens Awards presented by Dun Laoghaire CDB earlier this year. He represents Dun Laoghaire Football Club on the Forum Working Group. Abraham also gives us some useful information about the Asylum Seeker/Refugee position in Ireland.

PLUS represents a small number of refugees and asylum seekers who came to Ireland as separated minors seeking asylum without family members here to support, advise or comfort them. The group was formed in 2005 and meets under the auspices of Dún Laoghaire Refugee Project (DRP) to socialize, support each other and to discuss the progress of our campaign to be allowed remain in our adopted country, Ireland.

In order to understand the plight of most of the AOS* in Ireland we must fully appreciate the difference between "refugee" and "asylum seeker" - however, PLUS makes no distinction in the delivery of its support services.

A **refugee** as defined in law under the Geneva Convention and the 1996 Irish Refugee Act (as amended 1999), is someone who is unable to return to his or her country of origin due to a well founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group and who is not afforded protection by the forces of law and order of his/her own state. According to the Refugee Act, the term "membership of a particular social group" has been extended to include members of a trade union and membership of a group of persons whose defining characteristic is gender or a particular sexual orientation. Separated minors seeking asylum are afforded unique services and protection, which are withdrawn on reaching the age of majority in Ireland.

Some of the group members arrived in Ireland at the age of fourteen and most are now over eighteen years of age and therefore, they are known as "aged-out" minors. We have estimated that there are approximately five hundred "aged-out" minors (AOS) in the country. This is a unique group of individuals who are the victims of an era, in which the system of processing their application was extremely slow and involved many different strands. With various improvements in the system and changes in the law, now we've seen a proliferation in the processing of applications with some alarming consequences for the AOS.

A **Convention Refugee** is a person seeking asylum that has been granted refugee recognition. Under the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, which is an international treaty that Ireland signed in 1956, the state must examine each application lodged with the government. Thus, someone is called a person seeking asylum while the decision on his/her application is pending. While awaiting this decision, the applicant is legally in the country. As asylum seekers we are provided with accommodation, food and an allowance of €19.10 per week. So just getting the bus into town can use up a large proportion of your weekly income. We are not allowed work nor attend third level education.

It is within the discretion of the Minister for Justice to grant those who were unsuccessful in their refugee application "humanitarian leave to remain". With "leave to remain" you are allowed work and can attend third level education but must pay foreign fees (which can be substantial and therefore prohibitive). If you are given "leave to remain" you have to apply each year to have it renewed. The majority, if not all of the AOS will meet some of the criteria under humanitarian leave to remain.

There are eleven criteria under which someone who has been turned down during the application process would be eligible to apply and possibly be granted, "Leave to Remain". They are as follows:

- The age of the person
- The duration of residence in the State of the person
- The family and domestic circumstances of the person
- The nature of the person's connection with the State
- The employment (including self-employment) record of the person
- The employment (including self-employment) prospects of the person
- The character and conduct of the person (including any criminal convictions)
- Humanitarian considerations
- Any representations duly made by or on behalf of the person
- The common good
- Considerations of national security and public policy.

The Drop-In Centre



The Drop-in Centre in the Dún Laoghaire Community Training Centre on York Road is where we meet every Monday evening. It is the hub of all the various activities that we are involved in. Amongst the activities at our Drop-in Centre is the formulation of policies and programs aimed at informing and educating the local Irish population on the issues facing asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland.

We also encourage people to take part in courses, many are doing the Leaving Certificate and also undertake voluntary work in charity shops, youth programmes, many assist with summer projects for inner city



children and festivals around the city - the Liberties Festival and the Dún Laoghaire Festival of World Cultures are examples. Occasionally some of the members represent the group at seminars and conferences. Some have presented papers. We also organize social events, quizzes, parties and outings.

The Objectives of Plus

Most of the lads are also members of the Dún Laoghaire Town Football Club and take part in tournaments and competitions especially with SARI (Sports Against Racism Ireland). In 2004 the group won the SARI Shield and decided to present it to the Gardaí in Dún Laoghaire in appreciation of the help and assistance they have been to us over the years.

The relationship between the Garda Síochána in Dún Laoghaire and the Asylum seekers is excellent. In Ireland people take it for granted that if they have a problem they can go to the Gardaí for help, whereas where the majority of us come from, the last people you would seek help from are the police. The fact that the Gardaí have successfully demolished the inherent fear and distrust many refugee and asylum seekers had for police officers is an indication of the calibre of the Gardaí involved and the effort they put into building the relationship.

Many members of PLUS attend Gardaí training sessions explaining to them why people coming from Africa have such difficulty in trusting the police, common cultural differences and also relaying some of their positive and negative experiences with the Gardaí since coming to Ireland. The Gardaí in the Dún Laoghaire area have set up an Intercultural Policing Forum to liaise with the local ethnic communities, not just asylum seekers, which also includes representatives of various communities who have come to work in Ireland especially over the last number of years. Two of the members of PLUS are on this committee.

Members of PLUS are very active. They are members of drama groups and have taken part in plays in Dublin and at festivals around the country. Some have been involved in making short films, they are in choirs and various music groups, have made CD's, two received World Refugee Days Awards in 2005, have featured on television and radio programmes, won scholarships to university (but are unable to take them up because of their status - one girl who got 590 points in her Leaving Certificate ended up repeating it because she was not allowed to attend college). The group received a Young Citizen Award in 2005 from the Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council.

Currently we are writing and rehearsing a play that we are planning to perform in Dún Laoghaire in the autumn, called "Who Cares?".

Over the past year we have had a number of visitors to the drop-in centre, including journalists, researchers, Dr John Neill, the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin and a representative of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, Dr Diarmuid Martin. All of the TD's for Dún Laoghaire have also paid us a visit. The first one to come along was Eamon Gilmore (Labour) followed by Barry Andrews (Fianna Fáil); Mary Hanafin, Minister for Education; Fíona O'Malley (Progressive Democrat) and Ciarán Cuffe

(Green Party). This resulted in an agreement to form a cross party Dail group to lobby the Minister of Justice on our behalf. Other politicians from outside the area also support our campaign. To date the Minister has refused to meet with this group even though members of Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Labour, the Progressive Democrats, the Green Party and Independent TD's, Senators and members of the European Parliament are supporting the campaign. We have also received support from a number of organizations and prominent individuals.

Ireland of the Welcomes & Our Future

Ireland has always striven to reach out to the less fortunate in various parts of the world, especially, sub-Saharan Africa, the Indian subcontinent and South America. Irish people have gained a well deserved international reputation for their humanitarian relief and development work in some of the most difficult and challenging circumstances and regions over the past century.

Since living here in Ireland, we have learned that the unique empathy with the downtrodden, destitute and starving populations around the world comes from this nation's personal experience of dispossession, famine, colonization and a long struggle for independence. The group found this story personally very moving and in many ways, inspiring.

We were very much struck by that wonderful phrase from the 1916 Proclamation - "to cherish all the children of the nation equally" - this important declaration has within it an obligation to uphold the right of the child in the republic - irrespective of race, creed, social circumstance, gender or ability.

It is certainly true that the ethos of this statement from the 1916 Proclamation imbued the founders of the Dún Laoghaire Refugee Project with such conviction that they have striven to help the children of other nations.

These children of other nations - of which, we are - came to this country seeking refuge, care and protection and, for the majority of us, we found a warm and embracing Céad Míle Fáilte here amongst our Irish hosts.

Isn't it strange that the government is lobbying the US government, to negotiate an amnesty for Irish citizens currently working and living illegally in the USA. Yet at home they have refused 'leave to remain' to the 'age-out minors' who are living here legally, and who are in need of the international protection that Ireland can offer. Well there is an old saying that charity begins at home.

**"Aos" is Gaelic for "folk" or "group of people" etc.
e.g. an t-aos óg (the youth or young people etc)*

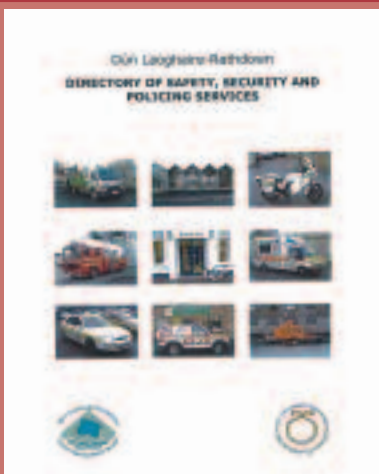
DIRECTORY OF SAFETY, SECURITY AND POLICING SERVICES

Arising from the County Development Strategy, the County Development Board identified a need for a Directory of Safety, Security and Policing services.

The Garda Síochána was the lead agency and was supported by Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, Community and Voluntary Forum and the Health Services Executive. The publication was co-funded by the County Development Board and the Community and Voluntary Forum.

The Directory gives a description of all the relevant services, contact details etc. for seven different categories:

Environmental Protection, Infrastructure Repair Services, Policing and Enforcement, Public Health and Safety, Public Transport and Road Safety, Rescue Services, Emergency Accommodation and Miscellaneous Services.



Any queries, updates etc. can be addressed to Mr Jim Carson, Community and Enterprise Department, Senior Executive Officer, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, Marine Road, Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin

Monkstown Ringroad

The last edition of the Newsletter reported on the proposed Monkstown Ring Road and the public hearing which was held to examine the matter in late January/early February 2006.

The two issues were the Compulsory Purchase Order affecting 16 houses in Yankee Terrace and area and the building of the road itself through Fleurville, Yankee Terrace, Rowanbryn, and Brookville Park.

After several delays the decision of An Bord Pleanála was finally published at the end of June 2006.

The decision rejected the Inspectors report on both issues and approved the development with some detailed modifications.

The full text of the Inspectors report and the response of the Board is available at www.pleanala.ie

In his report, the inspector asked the following question:

"Would the scheme have significant adverse impacts on the environment, and, if so, have adequate measures been proposed in order to mitigate or eliminate those impacts, such that the scheme ought to be approved?"

He concluded that "the EIS ... is inadequate in terms of its content to provide the Board with the necessary information so that it could be satisfied that the proposed road scheme ought to be approved. I am satisfied, beyond any reasonable doubt, that the adverse effects on the environment of this proposed roads scheme are so severe that the scheme ought not to be approved. I am also satisfied that the benefits of the scheme ... are so minimal and insignificant as to be far outweighed by the environmental costs of the scheme, both to the community in general and to those persons whose properties are sought to be acquired.

Accordingly, I consider that the Board should decide to refuse to approve the proposed roads scheme."

With regard to the CPO, the Inspector found that:

"the Local Authority has failed to establish that there is a community/public need for the proposed roads scheme, such as would justify the compulsory acquisition of property to achieve its development. Having regard to the limited benefits, in terms of reducing congestion within the local road network, and in terms of minimal reductions in journey times between Dun Laoghaire and Stillorgan, it is considered that the provision of the proposed road development would not confer significant benefits to the community, but would lead to severe adverse effects on the environment.

It is also considered that the entirety of the lands that are sought to be acquired are not required to achieve the stated objectives of the Local Authority, and that there are alternative means of achieving these objectives that would not require the compulsory acquisition of many of the said properties."

Accordingly, he recommended, "that the Board should refuse to confirm the CPO."

Unfortunately for the residents affected, the Board rejected both recommendations. Among its reasons for rejecting the report, the Board stated that it "considered that the proposed road development as modified would not result in significant net adverse effects on the environment in the vicinity of the road" and that it "accepted that the EIS was adequate."

Arising from this finding, the Dail Committee on Environment and Local Government is calling the Board to account for the way it has handled this and other infrastructure projects, in particular the way the Board has overruled its inspectors reports.

Voters Make Things Happen

When you register to vote, you strengthen your community's voice, because voters are listened to and it's voters that make things happen.

If you are aged 18 or over on 15 February next, you have a right to vote and there are special arrangements made to ensure everyone gets a chance to exercise that vote. For example, did you know that people who have a physical disability can avail of a postal vote at home. Also, voters who are resident in a nursing home, hospital, or other similar facility can arrange to have a special vote, where an officer will come to the residence and allow the elector to exercise their vote.

Each local authority has to ensure that at least one polling station is wheelchair accessible. If your designated polling station is not suitable for those with reduced mobility, you can apply in writing (at least a week before election), to your local authority to go to another polling station in the same constituency.

For those with a literacy difficulty or who are visually impaired, ballot papers are now printed with photographs and political emblems to help you and there is a large print copy of the ballot paper on display in the polling station to further aid you.

You can get assistance from a companion or the presiding officer if you have a visual impairment, physical disability or literacy difficulty. However, if you do require assistance, you are asked not to attend at a time when it is busy i.e. the last two hours of voting.

This year DLRCC are putting special emphasis on trying to ensure that electors with an intellectual disability are encouraged to vote. Special leaflets

are being prepared to provide straightforward and clear information on the election process. They will also be providing guidance to presiding officers on assisting electors with special needs.

So make sure you register. Contact your Local Authority or check their website to get details of TD's in your area. Make them aware of your needs and expectations and the fact that you have a vote.



CLANN CREDO

In November 2004, Clann Credo Chief Executive Paul O'Sullivan spoke at a Seminar arranged by the Community Forum on the topic of capital funding of community projects.

This year, Clann Credo celebrates a decade of community support and Paul tells us about its progress since 1996.

"Clann Credo - the Social Investment Fund is the leading provider of social investment funding for community based projects in Ireland.

Since its establishment in 1996, on the initiative of Sr. Magdalen Fogarty with the backing of her order, the Presentation Sisters, seventeen other congregations have become 'Social Investors'.

A limited company with charitable status, Clann Credo offers loans to organisations whose primary objective is development at a community level. This can be as ambitious as a social housing project or as simple as a small community enterprise creating employment. The main priority is not profit, although for the concept to work, a successful outcome is needed - the more money that is generated, the more projects can benefit from funding.

Projects are assessed against social and financial criteria using the methodology developed by Clann Credo since 1996.

Clann Credo supports the building of community infrastructure, community enterprise, employee, ownership, social housing, job creation and community loan funds while promoting healthcare, education, care of the earth, self-sufficiency and sustainability. Most projects assisted are community based.

Projects supported include **Blakestown & Mountview Neighbourhood Youth Project** in West Dublin; **Duagh Family Resource Centre** in north Kerry; **The Crew Network** based in Kildare is an organisation dedicated to the care, rehabilitation, education and occupational re-integration of those affected by substance misuse; **Portarlington Enterprise Centre**, 'Accessible Community Transport Southside (ACTS) Limited' - a transport service for people with disabilities and their families in south Dublin and **Speedpak Ltd** which provides real work experience for long-term unemployed people in a commercial, yet supported environment that also provides training.

Clann Credo maintains flexibility and structures its financial support to best meet the needs of a project. Sometimes agreements include a moratorium on repayment of capital for a period or timing repayments to coincide with

the projected income stream e.g. fundraising events etc. Interest is charged on the monies lent and the setting of interest rates includes an assessment of the risk involved in each case.



As a new stream of capital for the Community and Voluntary Sector, this capital can be used as 'matching finance' for State and EU support.

Clann Credo has developed projects with other agencies, such as the Western Development Commission through its Local Investment Fund. Last year an agreement was signed with the Irish Council for Social Housing to assist voluntary housing associations.

In the Budget last December Finance Minister, Brian Cowen, TD announced plans for additional funds for development of social investment in Ireland. This follows earlier submissions to government by Clann Credo. The establishment of a new vehicle to

channel funds to existing social finance providers further developing the concept in Ireland, is expected later this year.

We look forward to continuing to work with the government on this matter to provide improved options for finance for social projects. Our experience shows that providing this type of finance can be a key that unlocks local community enterprise in the short-term and create conditions for long-term sustainability."

If you would like to find out how Clann Credo can work with you to 'Generate an Inclusive Prosperity' contact:

Clann Credo Limited
Irish Social Finance Centre, 10 Grattan Crescent, Inchicore, Dublin 8.

Tel 01 453 1861 Fax 01 453 1862
E-mail: info@clanncredo.ie Web: www.clanncredo.ie

Are you thinking of going to College or University this year?

If you are interested in going to College or University in 2006, but require Education Grant Assistance, then Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council may be able to help.

There are **two initial requirements** in order to be eligible for assessment for Grant Assistance:

- You must be living in the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown area since 1 October 2005 or beforehand
- You must be intending to study at Honours Degree level or above.

If you fulfil the above two requirements, and would like to find out more details.
Please contact the Higher Education Staff at: Tel 205 4777 Email heg@drlrcoco.ie



We would like to hear from your organisation with a view to carrying details in forthcoming editions.

The Forum can be contacted at

DUN LAOGHAIRE – RATHDOWN COMMUNITY FORUM

C/o Community and Enterprise Department
County Hall, Marine Road
Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin

Email: ccf@drlrcoco.ie