



# FORÓIGE IN COUNTY WESTMEATH

**Foróige is a leading national voluntary youth organization engaged in youth development and education, which works with young people aged between 12-18 years. The members run the clubs themselves through the formation of committees that are assisted by voluntary adult leaders who supervise the activities in the Club. Foróige Clubs create a safe environment for its members to socialise and develop their personal and social skills. The Club gives members responsibility and also the opportunity to participate more fully in the community.**

Presently there are 11 clubs throughout the County. These Clubs are Boher, Castletown Geoghan, Coosan, Moate, Moyvoughley, Mount Temple, Rosemount, St. Lomans, St. Malachys, Tang and Tubberclair. Each club is involved in trying to make their community a better place. This year, Clubs were involved in many different projects and below are a brief over-view of activities and projects undertaken by the Club members.

**Boher Foróige Club** helped cultivate a field beside the Community Centre and transformed the field into a football pitch. This project involved leveling, landscaping and sowing and the Club received a citizenship award from the President in recognition of their contribution to the community. Boher held a symposium in March to show case their project to the local community and they also had a disco for Foróige members afterwards.



Members of Boher Foróige Club working very hard

**Coosan Foróige Club** spread their wings and brought their project to Zambia in Africa. They traveled the area and worked on projects organizing resources such as computers, schoolbooks and other materials. They raised €33,000 for this project. Coosan also received a Citizenship award from the President.



Members of Coosan Foróige Club mixing with the local Zambian community

**Castletown Geoghan and St. Malachy's Foróige Clubs** meet in the same hall but are split into different age ranges. This year the 2 Foróige clubs worked together to arrange a sponsored bike ride. The Clubs raised money for charity. The Clubs also hosted a disco and all funds were given to a very good cause. They are planning a trip away in the coming months.

**Moate Foróige Club** was only established in early January and they have already become an important force in the community. In March, members organised and took part in a sponsored walk which raised over €1000. This money was given to St. Vincent De Paul. Recreational activities include bowling, badminton and outdoor pursuits.



Members of Moate Foróige Club

**Moyvoughley Foróige Club** are presently involved in renovating the interior of the hall and they plan in the near future to raise money for outdoor renovations. They enjoy playing pool, soccer, bowling and listening to music.

**Mount Temple Foróige Club** is presently involved in cleaning up a local grave yard. They are also involved in researching local GAA in the area. They intend to enter the Permanent TSB Foróige Youth Citizenship awards this year with their projects. Mount Temple will be hosting the end of year event this year for all Foróige Clubs in Westmeath.

All Clubs will be themed in different colors at the disco. Padraig Heavin, a member of Mount Temple Foróige Club is currently on the National Executive.

**Rosemount Foróige Club** held a club for the younger members of the community. This worked extremely well and they were involved in a "stay-awake" which raised a substantial amount of money. The money was divided between Bóthar and 2 local people who are going out to Africa to work on a voluntary basis there.

They recently had a beautician come out to the club to give the girls make-up and hair tips! As usual, the boys observed shyly, but keenly interested !!!!!

**Tang Foróige Club** helped to organize a Christmas party for the young people of the community. Members dressed up as elves and helped to distribute the presents. Tang intends to enter this into the Permanent TSB Foróige Youth Citizenship awards this year. A successful "stay awake" was also organised by this energetic group and the funds raised were donated to Bothar .



Members of  
St. Lomans Foróige Club

**St. Lomans Foróige Club** travelled around Co. Westmeath last year and produced an informative colourful book on the history and geography of Westmeath. They have placed this book in the library in Mullingar so that all the community can enjoy this wonderful book.

**Tubberclair Foróige Club** is the most recent club to be formed in Co. Westmeath and opened in Mid February. Tubberclair have lots of ideas and they are planning a Community project in the near future. Presently they are raising money for equipment and getting involved in lots of different types of recreation.

Foróige offers young people the opportunity to meet, socialize, learn new skills and be active in both the local and broader community.

It strengthens the individual sense of "belonging" and assists in developing team activity, affords the opportunity to manage and operate their own Club, and actively introduces young people to the management roles involved in running a club or organization. Club members are responsible for the Chaining, Minuting and the Financial records of the club.

Foróige Clubs would not exist if it wasn't for the commitment and dedication of the leaders.

If you are interested in volunteering or helping to establishing a Foróige Club in your area please contact Bernie McHugh at 086 9672921.



Leaders pictured at the National Conference

## Monsignor McCarthy Complex

Battery Heights, Athlone

**The Monsignor McCarthy Complex is managed by the Midlands Regional Youth Service and serves the local community of the Battery Height, Athlone.**

Open since June 2005 the Monsignor McCarthy Complex is home to numerous projects and organisations, including:

- Athlone Youth Community Project
- ALF ~ Youth Diversion Project
- ACT ~ After School Project
- Battery Heights Family Resource Centre
- Barnardos Parent & Toddler Group
- Battery Heights Residents Association

Programmes and activities which operate from the Complex range from youth work activity, homework support programmes, bingo, computer classes, dance groups, arts & crafts, sport and recreation programmes, summer programmes and/or drop-in youth facility. The complex also has meeting and training rooms available.

In January 2007 the President of Ireland, Mrs. Mary McAleese visited the Complex and met all community groups and organisations operating from the complex as well as local residents. Young and old turned out to welcome the President and showcase their fine facility and their local community. In May 2007 the Monsignor McCarthy Complex received an award in the County Westmeath Pride of Place 2007 and the national judging took place in mid June. We all hope it will be a positive outcome.

Contact Details: Joanne O'Connor, Coordinator, AYCT.  
(090) 6444015.

## T.E.A.M. PROJECT

**T.E.A.M. (Temporary Emergency Accommodation Mullingar Limited) is a new project that opened in Mullingar in December 2005. We plan to open two hostels in Mullingar for homeless people in the next eighteen months.**

The first will provide emergency accommodation for homeless women and their children and the second for men. We operate a drop in service at No. 4 Bishopgate Street for homeless adults and anyone at risk of becoming homeless. People can avail of our shower and laundry facilities and we provide light snacks, advice, information and support regarding accommodation and an opportunity to assess each individual's needs. Support is offered to address such needs.

People in crisis need a friendly ear, sensitivity, understanding, direction and a safe environment to discuss their problems. We in T.E.A.M. offer all the above to our clients in an effort to alleviate their burdens. We hope our hostels will give them an opportunity to address their problems in a stable safe non judgemental environment.

Building and operation costs for our projects are partially reliant on fundraising. We are constantly promoting the needs of our clients in an effort to raise awareness and secure funds. We would appreciate any financial assistance offered and we thank all those who have supported us to date.

Contact Ann Quinn, Manager (044) 9348428

# Two People Sharing Ordinary Places

**Collinstown Day Service provides a day service to adults with autism. Last year Westmeath County Council awarded a grant to the Service to create a project that would encourage the inclusion of persons with disabilities within the community.**

The project was titled "Two People Sharing Ordinary Places."

Under the guidance of local artist Teresa Doyle a three dimensional installation of two people called John and Lucy were created.

They were made over a period of 3-4 months from recycled materials and then painted and glazed to withstand the outdoors.

John and Lucy were exhibited at the village bench in Collinstown from 23rd to 27th April 2007 and were extremely well received by the people of Collinstown and passers by alike.



John and Lucy

As part of the project a short film documenting the process of creating and exhibiting John and Lucy was made and spread the message of allowing persons with disabilities to share ordinary places. This film is available to view at

Castlepollard Library. The people of Collinstown Day Service involved in this project are Tommy McGrath, Mark McKeivitt, Joanne Cullen, Ann Molloy, Catherine Smyth, Olive Monaghan and Louise Kelly.

## HANDBOOKS FOR MIGRANT WORKERS

**In recent years Ireland has experienced a prolonged economic boom. The stream of jobs flowing from our economic success has ended a centuries old, flow of people, from this country and transformed Ireland into a multicultural society where an estimated 10% of the total population is non-Irish. A host of languages are spoken by these newcomers and can be heard daily in towns, villages and communities across the country.**



In late 2005 Westmeath Employment Pact drew together a number of agencies across the Midlands Region who were working with or concerned about the situation of Migrant Workers.

Drawing on their own resources and with funding from Comhairle and the County Development Borads in the region, this

grouping set itself the task of developing a short but detailed information leaflet for Migrant Workers in the 5/6 most widely spoken languages amongst Migrant Workers across the Midlands.

While the key information would remain the same from county to county local contacts would not.

The focus to date has been on migrant workers from the newer EU countries. Leaflets have been produced in plain English and Polish, with Lithuanian, Latvian and Russian available shortly.

Copies will be circulated to all key agencies and they will also be available in electronic format – PDF and MS Word versions.

For further information contact – Larry Fullam on 044 93 33828 or email [tep@eircom.net](mailto:tep@eircom.net)

## Creative Communities publication launched in Mullingar Arts Centre on May 2nd

On May 2nd 2007 a publication highlighting the work of three intergenerational projects was launched in Mullingar Arts Centre. Westmeath County Council and Westmeath County Development Board in association with Westmeath Community Development Ltd collaborated the development of these intergenerational arts project for 3 active age groups in Westmeath. The project was funded under the Cohesion Fund, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The aim of the projects were to explore, evaluate and document the potential for using arts activities with active age groups in conjunction with children or younger people as a resource for addressing the social exclusion of older people, in a way that is mutually beneficial for both groups.

The projects were designed to celebrate older adults, the lives they live in our communities and the very special contribution they make to our culture. They delight in the special bond that exists between older and younger members of our society. The aim of the publication is to challenge people to take more cognisance of the three-quarters of a million people aged over 55 in Ireland today. These three innovative projects in Westmeath have shown how the arts can bridge the generation gap and benefit the community by tapping into the wisdom, skills and experience of older people. These projects have also

promoted positive attitudes towards ageing and older people, while encouraging children and young people to recognise that learning through art can be a life-long process.

The First project, developed by artist Liz Johnson, was a collaborative arts project between Ballynacarrigy Young at Heart Group and Fifth Class from Ballynacarrigy National School. Participants worked through a variety of mediums in the visual arts to produce and complete individual and group pieces of work. The finished work was framed and exhibited in Ballynacarrigy.

The second project, co-facilitated by artist Teresa Doyle and filmmaker Fiona McGinty O'Neill, guided a mixed group of young and older people on an artistic journey over four months. Using visual arts practices and drama techniques, Teresa and Fiona helped the participants explore a range of creative possibilities and teased out what talents, stories, skills and resources were inherent in the group. The group consisted of 10 adult residents from Collinstown and Fore Parish and 23 pupils from St. Mary's Primary School, Collinstown. Using visual arts techniques, they produced an intriguing series of tablemats.

All of the weekly events were edited into a short film, which caught on camera many happy memories from this thoroughly enjoyable project.



Creative Communities Commemorative Booklet

Artist Maria Kenna coordinated the third project, Dream a Little with Me. This was a collaborative piece, involving students from the Mullingar Community College and 30 residents of St. Mary's Hospital Day Care Centre in Mullingar. The project centred on the participants, their experiences, home life, routine and environment. The process was recorded and documented in film and digital images, which formed a permanent reminder of the project for all involved.



Intergenerational project participants



Intergenerational project participants



Noel Tighe,  
Streete



William Swords,  
Rochfortbridge



Margaret Simpson,  
Moate



Demot Leavy,  
Kinnegad

# Johnny Crowley - popular choice as

Belvedere House and Gardens played host to over 300 community and voluntary people on Thursday 7th June 2007, who attended a celebratory event to applaud the local "People in the Community" who received the Westmeath County Council Cathaoirleachs Awards.

This was the first time Westmeath County Council had run such an event and based on this huge success it will be the first of many. It was attended by local councillors from Westmeath County Council, Athlone Town Council and Mullingar Town Council along with Oireachtas members.

Ms. Mary Davis, Chief Executive of the Special Olympics and Chairperson of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship delivered an inspiring speech to the audience and congratulated them on the community and voluntary work they carry out. Mr. Danny McLoughlin, Westmeath County Manager and Cllr. Joe Flanagan, Cathaoirleach of Westmeath County Council, spoke before the award ceremony began.

Those nominated for the award were:

Name	Nominated by:
<b>Carmel Ayres</b> .....	Pollard Grove Residents Association
<b>Peter Carter</b> .....	Newtown Lawns Residents Association
<b>Catrioina Corcoran</b> .....	Cuidiu - Mullingar Branch
<b>Jackie Craig</b> .....	Collinstown NS Parents Association
<b>Johnny Crowley</b> .....	Westmeath Community Games
<b>Annie Cunningham</b> .....	Drumraney Stroke Club
<b>Jim Denby</b> .....	Westmeath Tourism Council
<b>Eugene Dolan</b> .....	St. Pauls GFC, Clonmellon
<b>Helen Donnelly</b> .....	Student Support Group
<b>Ken Fitzpatrick</b> .....	Mullingar Kyokushinkai Karate Club
<b>Patrick Flanagan</b> .....	St. Lomans GAA Club
<b>Jackie Flannery</b> .....	Midland Regional Youth Services
<b>Pat Gaffney</b> .....	Cullion Hurling Club
<b>Kathleen Grennan</b> .....	Rosemount Tidy Towns
<b>John Julian</b> .....	Moate Variety Club

<b>Dermot Leavy</b> .....	Kinnegad Community Childcare Ltd.
<b>James Mahon</b> .....	Moyle Tidy Towns
<b>Martin McCann</b> .....	Ballinagore GAA Club
<b>Michael McGovern</b> .....	1428 Club
<b>Kitty Mulvaney</b> .....	Raharney Tidy Towns
<b>Ian O'Flynn</b> .....	Rochfortbridge Youth Club
<b>Martin Rattigan</b> .....	Mt. Carmel Drive Residents Association
<b>Margaret Simpson</b> .....	St. Patricks Crescent Residents Association
<b>William Swords</b> .....	Rochfortbridge Pitch and Putt Club
<b>Noel Tighe</b> .....	Streete Tidy Towns

All of these nominees received a Certificate of Recognition from the Cathaoirleach for commitment and contribution to their communities and local organisations, before the five Category Award winners were announced

**Community Involvement:**

Pat Gaffney, for Cullion Hurling Club, GaelScoil

**Youth Development:**

Johnny Crowley, Westmeath Community Games

**Environment and Heritage:**

Kathleen Grennan, Rosemount Tidy Towns

**Arts and Culture:**

John Julian, Moate Variety Club

**Active Citizenship:**

Michael McGovern, 1428 Active Retirement Club



The Cathaoirleach's Overall Award Winner 2007 was announced by Cllr. Joe Flanagan as JOHNNY CROWLEY, of the WESTMEATH COMMUNITY GAMES received the award for over 33 years voluntary service to Westmeath Youth with Westmeath Community Games. This was a hugely popular choice.

At the end of proceedings the Cathaoirleach surprised the crowd by announcing a Special Cathaoirleach's Award, which he



Jim Denby,  
Moate



Paddy Flanagan,  
Mullingar



Jackie Craig, AKA Auntie Litter,  
Collinstown



Peter Carter,  
Mullingar



Ellis Orme,  
Crookedwood



Johnny Crowley, Westmeath  
Community Games, Overall winner



Danny McLoughlin, County Manager, John Dunleavy, New York and Coole,  
Kathleen Grennan, Pat Gaffney, John Julian, Michael McGovern, Mary Davis, CEO  
Special Olympics Ireland, Cllr, Joe Flanagan, Johnny Crowley, Overall winner.

## 2007 Cathaoirleach Award Winner

presented to Mr. John Dunleavy, originally from Coole, who is an active member of the New York St. Patrick's Day Parade & Celebration Committee since 1967. Mr. Dunleavy flew home especially for the awards event. He has resided in New York for the last 44 years.

The magnificent Awards, created from Bog Oak, were specially commissioned from Helen Conneely, of Celtic Roots Studio, Ballinahown, Athlone. Earlier in the evening awards were presented for the Pride of Place School Gardens competition. The following were the recipients of the awards: Scoil Bhride boys school, Rochfortbridge, Presentation Senior School, Mullingar, St. Colmans NS Mullingar, St. Fechins NS Fore, St. Mary's NS Raharney and St. Pauls NS Athlone

### Pride of Place 2007 recognition awards

Awards of recognition were received by those who will be representing Westmeath in the Co-operation Ireland Pride of Place 2007. These are: Belvedere House, Gardens and Park, Tyrellspass, Crookedwood, Monsignor McCarthy Complex, Athlone and St. Kieran's Community Centre Athlone. Pride of place is an initiative set up to celebrate and reward community development activity throughout the island of Ireland.

Over €230,000 in community grants have been given out by Westmeath County Council this year to date and on the night two significant project grants were announced. From a shortlist of ten, the lucky projects to receive €10,000 each were 1428 Active Retirement Club, Mullingar and Athlone Community Radio.

## WESTMEATH SPORTS PARTNERSHIP LAUNCH CYCLESAFE PROGRAMME

A new CycleSafe programme for Westmeath was launched by Westmeath Sports Partnership on Monday 14th May 2007 to promote safe cycling for children on Westmeath roads. This new initiative is supported by the HSE, Westmeath County Council and Cycling Clubs in Westmeath. The CycleSafe programme will be rolled out in all primary schools across Westmeath, and teaches children bike handling skills, such as, for example, how to deal with meeting oncoming cars while in a group.

12 children from Curraghmore National School got the chance to test out twelve new bicycles and helmets courtesy of Westmeath Sports Partnership. On the day it emerged that most of the children had their own bicycles but not all owned helmets, and this is an area the CycleSafe programme wishes to highlight. Speaking at the launch, Chairman of Westmeath County Council, Cllr. Joe Flanagan said this programme was addressing local needs at a very local level.

"it addresses some key issues in today's society, such as encouraging our children to get more active, educating them on main issues around road safety, which is vitally important and it also creates new opportunities for integration and socialising" he said. Talking to the pupils of Curraghmore, Cllr. Flanagan said that "cycling is an ideal form of transport, it's very cheap and you don't have to buy petrol, just use your own energy! It's a very healthy way to get around and you don't have to sit in any traffic jams and it's also very environmentally friendly.



Westmeath cycling clubs such as Lakeside Wheelers in Mullingar and Shannonside Cycling Club in Athlone are now hoping to set up junior cycling clubs on the back-bone of this programme.

The Primary Schools that have received training are:-  
Curraghmore NS • Down NS • Milltown NS • St. Tolas NS  
St. Oliver Plunkett's NS • Convent Girls School  
Athlone Mixed NS • Tubberclare NS • Moyvore NS  
Tyrellspass NS • Dalystowns NS • St. Ernans NS • St. Cremins NS

If you would like more information on this programme, please contact the Westmeath Sports Partnership Office at 044-9390208 or visit [www.westmeathsports.ie](http://www.westmeathsports.ie)

# WESTMEATH LOCAL AUTHORITIES PLAY POLICY AND PLAYGROUND PROVISION SCHEME

**The United Nations Convention on the rights of the Child, recognised and enshrined the basic right of the child to have access to age appropriate play and recreation activities and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.**

At Government level the National Children's Strategy published in 2000 and the National Play Policy published in 2004, established the policy context to ensure the play rights and needs of all children can be addressed.

The National Play Policy established a number of key objectives which have been placed at the core of the Westmeath Play Policy, adopted by Westmeath Local Authorities in January 2007. This policy was developed following extensive consultation, in particular consultation with children. The Play Policy provides a focus for all agencies with a role in enhancing the lives of children and will seek a co-ordinated and cohesive response to addressing the rights and needs of children in our society.

In the context of playground provision, such facilities can provide the perfect environment to build cognitive, perceptual, emotional and social skills. During play children become more aware of their surroundings and the people around them.

Providing a playground can be a long process that requires careful consideration of a number of issues, including; the site, the design, safety, consultation, funding,

insurance, maintenance and management. The location and scale of proposed playgrounds also need to be kept realistic and appropriate and potential funding arrangements can make best use of resources available (i.e. Government Grants, Council and/or Community funding)

In progressing the provision of playground facilities in Westmeath, the Playground Provision Scheme as adopted by Westmeath County Council in January 2007 is considered an important implementation mechanism within the overall Play Policy and in essence sets the scene for the provision of playground facilities in Westmeath in the coming years.

It will be sought through the scheme to ensure the equitable distribution of playground facilities throughout the county and to address any issues that may arise in doing so.

In this regard, looking at how communities might partner the Council in providing playground facilities, as appropriate, in their own areas will be an important consideration. Through the Playground Provision Scheme, Westmeath County Council will therefore facilitate;

1. The provision of publicly accessible playground facilities throughout the county in the context of any grant funding that may be available to assist projects.

2. The advancement as necessary of playground provision in partnership with communities, working with them to address issues in relation to availability of land, location and size of playground, consultation mechanisms, insurance and funding. Communities themselves being in a position to part finance and manage facilities will be a key consideration.

3. Where Developers of large housing estates can be encouraged to provide appropriate play facilities within and as part of each development, the Council will seek to do so.

4. An equitable, appropriate and proportionate distribution of playground facilities in the county. Achieving the aims of the Playground Provision Scheme will require not only time and money but also the co-operation and patience of communities in our combined efforts to ensure the equitable and adequate provision of playground facilities in Westmeath.

Some disappointment may well be expected along the way, but it is hoped that in working with our communities in a structured and co-ordinated way as set out in the scheme, it will ensure as far as is practicable, that the important people in all of this "the children" can be provided with access to playground facilities that meet their needs and that the important role of play in their lives will help to shape them into positive, confident and creative young adults.

## PwDI WESTMEATH



Jim McClean, National Board Chairperson; Senator Camillus Glynn, Hugh MacGuire, Chairperson, Westmeath Network; Michael D. Ringrose, CEO National Office and Treasa McLoughlin, Committee Member.

**The Network and the committee has had a very busy start to 2007 the following projects and events have already taken place:- Disability Rights Seminar celebrating the "Year of**

**Equality for All" 2007** took place on 31st January 2007 in the Bloomfield House Hotel, Mullingar. The seminar was a great success and delivered on the theme for the day by the excellent input from the guest

speakers. Thanks to funding provided by the **Citizens Information Board** and the very good guidance from a cross representative Steering Group the second year of the **Westmeath Network Independent Advocacy Service** has commenced, which is proving to be a success with people with Intellectual Disabilities transferring from residential centres to live in community homes.

The cooperation & teamwork between the two P.w.D.I. Advocacy Officers and the Staff of the H.S.E. Dublin Mid/Leinster Lough Sheeher Centre Services and the Sisters of Charity of Jesus & Mary Delvin services has been critical to the success of this vital service being provided.

The **10th Westmeath Network A.G.M.** took place on 10th June 2007 in the Radisson Hotel, Athlone. Guest Speakers were **Senator Camillus Glynn** who gave a very informative presentation and **PwDI Westmeath Independent Advocacy Officer Michelle Dolan** who gave an excellent presentation on "Independent Advocacy".

An **"Independent Advocacy Awareness Training day"** took place on 22nd June 2007 in Bloomfield House Hotel, Mullingar.

This day was planned as the start of an awareness process to create an understanding of Independent Advocacy, which is a fairly new concept.

## YOUNG PEOPLE'S CREATIVE WRITING PROJECT- KILBEGGAN

This project now running in its second year is aimed at young people who are interested in Creative Writing or have dreams of writing their own book, film script or Short story. The project caters for 14- 18 year olds and runs in Kilbeggan Library every Tuesday evening. Westmeath Arts Office in association with Offaly Arts Office runs this series of creative writing workshops for young people with novelist and teenage author Caroline Barry.

The students learn to develop a character, structuring a plot, learn about pacing, editing, critique and the business of publishing, as well as exploring the art form. Last year the young people's work was published in an anthology entitled *Stories from the Twisted Tree*, which was launched by Actor Rosaleen Linehan in December 2006. A second Anthology of new work will be published in December 2007. Each year 2 young budding authors from the Course are offered bursaries to attend nationally renowned "The Dingle writers course" in Kerry in order to meet and learn from award winning authors such as Aubrey Flegg among others as well as people from the publishing industry who are in search of new talent.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN WESTMEATH

**What is an affordable home? An affordable home is a home you can purchase from Westmeath County Council at a discount to the market price. You can live in the house for as long as you want and you can also sell the house when you want.**

If you sell within 20 years however, you will have to pay back a percentage of the sale price to Westmeath County Council. Finance can also be obtained from Bank of Ireland, EBS or IIB Homeloans Ltd etc.

The main elements of the affordable housing scheme are as follows:

Houses provided by Westmeath County Council under this Scheme will be sold at a discount from Market Value.

To be eligible to purchase a house, persons must satisfy an income test or surrender a local authority or voluntary housing accommodation.

Loan finance up to 97% of sale price may be provided by Westmeath County Council to eligible purchasers at a current variable interest rate of 4.75% or a fixed rate of 4.85% (for 5yrs) excluding mortgage protection (0.598%).

**Please note: Interest rates may vary.**

A graduated subsidy will reduce mortgage repayment for households with income of €28,000 per annum or less.

If a house purchased under this scheme is resold within 20 years from the date of purchase, the person selling the property shall pay to the Council out of the proceeds of the sale an amount equal to a percentage of the proceeds. Maximum of Affordable Loan is €185,000.

The purchaser will be required to use the affordable house as their full time residence.

Westmeath County Council will have affordable houses available very shortly in Rochfortbridge. These are six 3 bed houses with a starting price of €150,000 and are convenient to both primary and secondary schools. There will also be affordable houses available in Moate, Mullingar and Kilbeggan in the coming year. For more information contact Andrea or Anne on 044 - 9332119.

## YOUTH DANCE PROJECT



**Dancer in Residence for Westmeath and Roscommon Niamh Condrón has developed a new and exciting dance project for young people in the Athlone Region for the third year running. She has introduced the students of Summerhill College and Our Lady's Bower to the many possibilities that contemporary dance can offer them in their personal and artistic growth as young adults emerging into the final era of their school time.**

She has increased students' awareness of contemporary dance and broadened their knowledge of their own potential for creativity through movement and choreography. She has been teaching dance skills, facilitating dance for film viewings and choreographing dance pieces over the course of her residency.

During the project she will be guiding the students, through class work, to develop their confidence, to become physically active and to develop as creative people. This is a wonderful opportunity to strengthen the art form of dance here in Ireland and to teach young people a new means of physical expression and exploration.

The Vibrate Dance Festival incorporates both the live and recorded presentation of dance and dance companies in various locations around Athlone town. It is the culmination of Niamh Condrón's residency in Athlone. The weekend incorporates performances of new work by Summerhill & Our Lady's Bower Youth Dance Groups which premiered in Athlone Castle on Sunday May 27th at 2.30 pm.

The new pieces of work entitled "Butter" and "Fly" show dances worked on in class and choreographic ideas based on the dancers themselves as individuals alive in 2007 bringing with them as they go their past experiences and future dreams.

# ACCESS ALL RURAL AREAS

## Irish Rural Link Perspective

by Seamus Boland

**The challenges faced by rural communities in Westmeath are in many cases similar to the ones encountered by many communities across the Island of Ireland.**

The type of community we live in ranges from isolated rural neighbourhoods to towns and villages swallowed up in the growing commuter belt.

The Irish Rural Link strategic plan launched in February 2007 highlighted in three words the main concerns of rural communities: -

"Access to services"

Many of the people we talked to made it clear that any decline in the provision of services such as health, postal and banking, transport or basic information represents a serious decline in quality of life and for many, particularly those on lower income; it means a life lived either on or below the poverty line.

In rural isolated areas much of the population resident during day time tends to be comprised of carers, the retired, lone or stay at home parents and the elderly.

The recent announcement by An Post to close up to 500 post offices following a review over the next year means that no existing post office in rural areas is secure. The demise of the local shop and pub in many areas represents the end of many small villages and represents a loss of identity for people who live there.

Yet for some towns the opposite is happening. These are places within travelling distance from the major cities of population.

In the Midlands this means an influx of people from Dublin, who cannot afford the housing costs in their native city, so they purchase down the country. As a result large settlement patterns are occurring in many towns, putting huge pressure on the provision of services such as schools, water and sewage provision, health facilities and much more.

A lot has been written about sustainability. It is obvious that sustainable rural and urban communities should be the ultimate aim of both local and national government.

Services to rural areas are often described by some economists in terms of cost effectiveness, as if they were some how cheaper to provide in urban areas. It is clear that some services will never become cost effective and yet they are essential if people's dignity and quality of life is to be maintained in any reasonable manner.

Indeed the profitability or as is often the case their non-profitability does not prevent the provision of public services in cities, so why must it be used in rural areas?

Many European countries such as Sweden, Germany and Scotland have come to the conclusion that the future of rural areas cannot be left to market forces or any other type of chance. In Sweden they have a novel approach whereby each area is tied into a tracking system, which monitors the distance between families and public services. This allows local and national government to determine the level of accessibility of services to communities and to institute corrective action when deficiencies arise.

During the National Social Partnership talks, which led to the publication of Towards 2016, Irish Rural Link underlined the need to link all of Government policies, so that people are not discriminated against simply because policies are being implemented without reference to each other.

In practical terms the full implementation of the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) in the Midlands area will be hugely beneficial. However, only if it is linked to the establishment of adequate transport, education and health facilities in the area. Strategies to assist child care and facilities for the elderly, need to run hand in hand with the implementation of the NSS.

Equally, the availability of locally based social services is a must if people who are disadvantaged in some way are to achieve equality with those who are well off. As well as providing a higher quality of employment for our young people the NSS once linked to all other strategies becomes a template for sustainability of communities. Instead of our youth migrating to the cities for employment they will remain in their own area.

In summary the survival of rural areas will not happen by the continuation of a type of laissez faire policy, where it is hoped that something will turn up. Challenges facing rural communities are simply challenges. If we fail to meet and overcome them then, then we will have real problems.

Seamus Boland, CEO of Irish Rural Link and a member of the National Economic Social Council

*Note on Irish Rural Link- Was founded in 1991 to represent Rural communities at local and national and European level. It was invited by Government to participate at national social partnership level representing the rural agenda.*

*It provides advice and training to rural community groups and is based in Moate Business Park, Clara Road, Moate Co Westmeath.*

## ARE YOU THINKING OF RETURNING TO EDUCATION?



**Co. Westmeath VEC**  
Coiste Gairmoideachais Chontae na hIarmhí

To find out what courses are available contact:

**CO. WESTMEATH VEC  
ADULT EDUCATION CENTRES**

**Contact: Ann or Evelyn**

Mullingar Adult Education Centre  
Austin Friar Street, Mullingar.  
Tel: 044-9342111 Fax: 044-9345834.

Email:  
adultguidanceservicenth@westmeathvec.ie

**Contact: Anne-Maree or Margaret**

Athlone Adult Education Centre  
Pearse Street, Athlone  
Tel: 090-6474080 Fax: 090-6497000  
Email:

adultguidanceservicesth@westmeathvec.ie



## MESA

**MESA delivers the National Supported Employment Programme to Counties Westmeath, Offaly, Longford and Laois. Supported Employment is a programme which enables people with disabilities to be employed in paid jobs in the open labour market. The programme is supported by FÁS under the National Development Plan.**

With offices in Mullingar and Athlone, MESA works with people with a broad range of disabilities and has very good success in integrating people into paid employment, providing support to assist with this integration process and meeting the labour requirements of employers.

Experienced Employment Officers ensure that appropriate support is provided to job seekers, employers and co-workers during the Job Placement.

Supported Employment is a choice for job seekers with a disability. MESA offers confidential advice on various careers, support in identifying skills and interests and assistance in identifying and applying for the most suitable employment. MESA offers continued support to employees, employers and family during and after job placement.

There are many benefits of Supported Employment. People with a disability receive an opportunity to earn money through employment, allowing them to boost their self esteem and confidence and feel that they are making a worthy contribution to society.

Companies benefit by having more people available to do work and our economy benefits because more people are actively engaged in production. By employing people with disabilities, companies are carrying out their community duty and supporting the society in which they exist.

If you would like to know more about MESA and the Supported Employment Programme, you can contact our office in Mullingar on 086 8338027 and Athlone on 086 3842496.



**ST PETER'S, ATHLONE: Back Row (L to R): Liam Condon, An Taisce; Evelyn Cusack, RTE; Darina Dolan, Principal; Noreen Gibney, Environmental Awareness Officer, Westmeath County Council. Front Row (L to R): Green School Committee Members: Nadina McEvoy, Laura Lennon and Gbemisola Olaoye.**

## GREEN SCHOOLS

**Westmeath County Council is proud to announce the number of schools in Co Westmeath with coveted Green Flag status has risen to thirty. At an awards ceremony in Taylor's' Hall, Dublin recently, An Taisce presented flags to eight Westmeath Schools. Special guest of honour to assist in presenting prizes was Ms. Evelyn Cusack (weather presenter and forecaster with RTÉ). The schools receiving awards were:**

### FIRST FLAG

#### - Litter and Waste Management

Schools receiving their first Green Flag for Litter and Waste Management were:  
St. Peter's National School, Athlone  
All Saints National School, Mullingar  
St. Oliver Plunkett  
Boys National School, Moate  
Colaiste Mhuire, Mullingar

### RENEWAL OF FLAGS - Energy and Water

Schools renewing their flags were:

- Columba College, Killucan (forth flag for Water)
- Community College Millmount, Mullingar (second flag for Energy)
- St Colmcille National School, Ballinahown (third flag for Water)
- St Marys' National School, Collinstown (second flag for Energy)

Any school or education facility can become a green school. Further information and advice on the Green Schools Programme is available from: Environmental Awareness Officer, Environment Section, Westmeath County Council, Bishopsgate Street, Mullingar tel: 044-93 32128/044-93 32226 or [www.westmeathcoco.ie](http://www.westmeathcoco.ie) An Taisce tel: 01-4002222, or [www.greenschoolsireland.org](http://www.greenschoolsireland.org)

## REVIEW OF WESTMEATH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

**Westmeath Community and Voluntary Fora and the County Forum have been very busy over the last twelve months or so, attending information sessions with Planners and making submissions to the County Development Plan Review.**

Westmeath County Council now report that over 800 submissions have been received including submissions from Mullingar, Coole, Kilbeggan and Athlone Area Fora along with a submission from the County Forum. Terry McCague, Senior Planner said recently that he welcomed these submissions, which raised community issues and added balance to the submissions in relation to zoning. The main issues people have been concerned with are zoning, community

issues, open space, play areas, traffic and safety, preservation and enhancement of amenities including our lakes, water abstraction and eco design. The review process continues with the County Manager making a report to the elected members, detailing a response to each submission and showing how the Plan addresses these issues. This report must be complete by 27th July 2007.

The Elected Members then have a further twelve weeks to consider the Managers report. If they request any amendments, the process continues with a further round of public consultation on these amendments. The statutory date for completion of the review process is 14th March 2008.

## COMPETITION

Answer the following questions and be in with a chance to win one of two prizes of €75 (for individual entries) or one of three prizes of €100 (in respect of group/organisation entries):

- 1 Who won the 2007 Cathaoirleach's Overall Award?
- 2 How many Foróige Clubs are in County Westmeath?
- 3 Mary McAleese visited which complex in January 2007?
- 4 How many Westmeath schools now have the Green Flag?

All answers can be found in this edition of the Westmeath Community and Voluntary Forum newsletter.

Please submit your entries in number order, stating your name, address and contact telephone number. For groups/organisations please state the group/organisation name.

Entries should be sent to : Westmeath Community and Voluntary Forum  
C/o Community and Enterprise Section  
Westmeath County Council,  
Co. Buildings, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath

**Closing date for receipt of entries is Friday 7th September 2007.**

## NEWSLETTER ISSUE 6 COMPETITION WINNERS:

**GROUP WINNERS**  
(each received €100):

**ST. MARY'S NATIONAL SCHOOL**  
Raharney

**FORÓIGE YOUTH CLUB**  
Northgate St. Athlone

**MILLTOWNPASS COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT GROUP**

**INDIVIDUAL WINNERS**  
(each received €75):

**MARGO FITZSIMONS**  
Raharney, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath

**GEOFFREY MORRISSEY**  
Simonstown, Coole, Co. Westmeath

**P.J. MOORE**  
Auburn Terrace, Athlone, Co. Westmeath

## AFFILIATE TO WESTMEATH COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY FORUM!

**The purpose of the Community and Voluntary Forum is to facilitate the representation of and participation by community and voluntary groups in matters relating to Westmeath County Development Board, Westmeath County Council and other relevant structures in the County.**

The Community and Voluntary Forum provides for an exchange of information and is structured on an area basis i.e. Coole, Kilbeggan, Mullingar, Athlone as well as a County Remit Forum for groups with a countywide (rather than area) Remit. These Fora nominate representatives to the County Forum. The National Federation of Community and Voluntary Groups has negotiated a reduced rate of insurance for all affiliated groups, which is a welcome development.

In the past twelve months all the Westmeath Area Fora and the County Forum, have been actively involved in making submissions to the Review of the County Development Plan and are staunch supporters of the Volunteerism project.

Affiliation Forms and further details are available from the Community & Enterprise Office, County Buildings, Mullingar, or on [www.westmeathcoco.ie](http://www.westmeathcoco.ie)  
Phone: 044 9332137  
Email address: [pgibney@westmeathcoco.ie](mailto:pgibney@westmeathcoco.ie)  
or [leonie.geraghty@westmeathcoco.ie](mailto:leonie.geraghty@westmeathcoco.ie)

## VOLUNTEER CENTRE

**A Westmeath Volunteer Centre has been established under the County Development Board Strategy. This Centre is based at Presentation House, Harbour Street, Mullingar.**

Ian O'Flynn is the Manager and an outreach worker is to be based in Athlone commencing in August. A database of all volunteers and groups in Westmeath has been established. Progress to date has seen increased involvement by volunteer groups and individuals:

- 90 volunteers have registered
- 172 groups have registered with opportunities for volunteers to join them.
- 75 volunteers are matched with groups.
- Volunteers have been placed in 28 different groups

There are about 500 groups on the database who are contacted on a regular basis with information relevant to their organisation. National Volunteer Day is September 26th 2007. The theme of the day is 'Community Makeover'. It is planned to host two events that week, one event will target schools, with particular emphasis on Transition year students and the other will see a launch of an information pack with CD.

Contact Ian O'Flynn 086 1743470 or 044 9348571.  
Email: [ioflynn@westcd.ie](mailto:ioflynn@westcd.ie) [www.westcd.ie](http://www.westcd.ie)



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