



# Wavelength

NEWS & INFORMATION FOR THE COMMUNITY & VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Issue No.4, May 2002

WELCOME once again to this edition of Wavelength, the networking and information newsletter of the community and Voluntary sector. Since our last issue, the County Development Board's much anticipated document 'Kilkenny 2002-2012 - A Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development', has been launched. Following exhaustive consultation with communities throughout the county, the CDB have come up with an ambitious blueprint for the future that will hopefully pave the way for the sustainable development of Kilkenny City and County over the coming decade. Well done to all concerned, the work has only just begun! Meanwhile, once the dust settles on the General Election, all we can hope for as Community and Voluntary organisations is that the incoming administration will recognise the vital work that the C&V sector do and fully support us in our efforts through increased allocation of funding and resources and in particular retention of CE schemes which are an essential element in the day to day running of many voluntary organisations. Once again your comments/opinions/criticisms are always welcome, so far the feedback has been mostly positive. We think we're heading in the right direction with the newsletter and the service it provides and we hope to have some new and interesting features in the pipeline for the next issue. Until then best wishes with all your endeavours.

## An ambitious blueprint for Kilkenny's future

### A Shared Vision for County Kilkenny

Kilkenny County Development Board's Chairman, Michael Lanigan, launched the Strategy for Economic Social and Cultural Development in the Parade Tower on April 30. The following is the Foreword (page 1) and "A Shared Vision for County Kilkenny" (page 8). The full document can be seen on the Web at [www.kilkennycdb.ie](http://www.kilkennycdb.ie)

For this strategy to reach its full potential, it should form part of an integrated, cross-sectoral and county-wide approach to the development of Kilkenny. We look forward with enthusiasm to many synergies between it and other important development initiatives in the county.

That the performance of all participating organisations is enhanced as a result of working within the County Development Board.  
• Focus on Social Inclusion  
A focus on Social Inclusion underpins the plans and actions of the County Development Board.



Members of the County Development Board at the launch of the Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development which was held in the Parade Tower, Kilkenny.

#### FOREWORD

It is with a great sense of optimism that we bring you this 10-year strategy for the economic, social and cultural development of Kilkenny.

If you are one of the many people who participated in the public consultation process, you may even recognise your own input. All of the actions in this strategy emerge from the issues discussed during 19 public meetings held throughout Kilkenny last year. People from all sectors, ages and walks of life were generous with their views and their time, and this strategy belongs to them.

We are also most grateful for the great spirit of partnership and dedication shown by the providers of public services in Kilkenny who all worked extremely hard to develop this strategy.

This is the culmination of a committed process whereby these public services providers negotiated a plan for the future that balances their needs, both with each other, and with the end-users of their services.

We want this to be a working strategy, one that is actively used on the ground here in Kilkenny. For this to happen, people at the coalface of public service delivery must believe in it, and must use it in their everyday working lives.

This strategy should help to create a shared sense of purpose among the providers of public services in Kilkenny, and their shared vision should be in evidence on the ground in the delivery of their services.

#### A SHARED VISION FOR COUNTY KILKENNY

The Kilkenny County Development Board subscribes to a set of principles that underpin all of its activities. These principles have helped to guide and shape the strategy recommended for County Kilkenny.

We, the members of the Board, subscribe to the following set of guiding principles:

- Openness and commitment to change.
- Board members are open and willing and work as a cohesive team to ensure the success of the overall process.
- Participation and Equality  
The voice of the local community is heard and that full participation by all is facilitated. The strategy reflects the input of the various sectoral groups within the Board.
- Consensus and Mutual Respect  
Decisions are arrived at by consensus with mutual respect for the legitimacy and validity of all interests.
- Sustainable Development  
The policy, plans and actions of the strategy reflect the Agenda for Sustainable Development with specific reference to national and EU objectives.
- Policy Proofing  
The plans and actions of the Board are proofed against poverty and exclusion. Appropriate rural development and equality policies are enshrined within the parameters of the strategy.
- Value

#### KEY ISSUES AFFECTING SPORT DEVELOPMENT

As with other sectors of the community the County Development Board has consulted with the Sports Clubs and Organisations to document what for them are the key issues affecting sport development in Kilkenny at present and to look at how these issues can be tackled.

This consultation process was organised through a newly established Sports Forum. This forum was established with a view to representing on a collective basis the voice of sport for the county.

It represents a variety of sports clubs and organisations from around the county. It has met a number of times to document what for them are the key issues. The following is a summary of the feedback received:

**What are the key issues facing clubs / organisations at present?**  
**Lack of adequate facilities** was the most over-riding issue raised. While Kilkenny is rated as one of the top sporting counties in the country the general view was that sporting facilities do not reflect this and in general provision both in the city and throughout the county is poor.  
Many existing facilities are under utilised. There is a need for these to be better utilised, be they current sports facilities, community centres or school sports facilities. It was also recognised that there is a need for the development of a multi-purpose sports centre, catering for all sports and accessible to all.

### Asylum Seekers give their views

A WORKSHOP was convened with asylum seekers as part of a wider consultation process being undertaken by Kilkenny County Development Board in the preparation of their 10-year strategy for economic, social and cultural development for County Kilkenny.

The main objective of the workshop was to ascertain the views of and issues affecting asylum seekers in the preparation of this strategy.

A number of key issues were identified and discussed:

#### DISCRIMINATION

Racism was high on the agenda. Many of those consulted with spoke of the verbal abuse experienced by them on the streets of Kilkenny. This seemed to be predominantly experienced by the negro asylum seekers.  
Safety and security was raised as an issue. Many fear walking alone in some streets of Kilkenny at night because of the intimidation they experience.

A lot of frustration was expressed in relation to the judicial system in this country. The perception exists that there are discrepancies between provisions for asylum seekers and the wider population.

An example given was in relation to the time allowed in relation to the preparation for a judicial inquiry - where an Irish person is given between four and six months to prepare, asylum seekers are given just 14 days to prepare.

In the discussions the sense of there being a lack of understanding amongst the wider population about asylum seekers and as a result the asylum seekers sensing a lack of being heard, help to lead to this discrimination taking place.

#### RESTRICTED LIFESTYLE

The general view expressed was that because of the strict rules and regulations laid down by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, asylum seekers are forced to live like prisoners. Legislation is such that they are not permitted to work. They cannot partake in education and they cannot travel.

#### INFORMATION

The asylum seekers spoke of the need for better education and awareness for both communities - that of non-nationals and the Irish community, to ensure that both sides are fully informed on the facts and issues relating to the other.

#### FOR THE ETHNIC GROUPS/ASYLUM SEEKER

There is a general lack of awareness of services available and how to access services. Also knowing where to source this information is proving difficult.

#### FOR THE IRISH CITIZEN

The feedback received from this consultation will be used for two purposes. Firstly, it will go to inform the sports section of the County Development Board 10 Year Plan on "Social, Cultural & Economic Strategy" for County Kilkenny.

Secondly, the information will be fed into the current application that is being prepared for the Irish Sports Council "Local Sports Partnership" Initiative.

For more information on the Sports Forum please contact the Mr Pat Boyd, Kilkenny Rowing Club, c/o James Stephens Swimming Pool, Kilkenny. Tel: 056-21380 (7.30am-10.30am) or 056-51177, or Brid Hynes in Community & Enterprise Section, County Council. Tel: 056-52699 Ext 229.

A need for "awareness raising" amongst the wider population was identified. There was a common view that local people in general are not aware of conditions for asylum seekers.

There is a lack of awareness amongst the wider population of why asylum seekers leave their home countries to enter Ireland or any other country.

One view expressed, which reflected the wider group, was that "asylum seekers come here to survive. We are not criminals. We are here because we are running from persecution in our own countries. Yet when we get here we live like prisoners for eight months to be, in many cases, sent back again".

It was felt that the Government has a role to play in raising such awareness.

The view was also expressed that the wider population needs to be informed about the fact that money spent on asylum seekers in this country is money received from the United Nations. It is not Government money. People need to be made aware of this.

The need to be better informed in terms of the policing service was raised. Those spoken with, highlighted the need to build positive relationships with the local Gardaí. They identified the need to be informed on Irish laws and how they operate in Kilkenny with a view to being better equipped in dealing with problems and issues that arise from them.

#### SERVICE PROVISION

Two main issues were raised and discussed accommodation and health.

#### ACCOMMODATION

There were a number of issues raised in relation to this matter. The first port of call for single people when moving to Kilkenny is the local hostel. Currently, there are in the region of 80 people living here. For the women, some of whom are pregnant, they must be seven months pregnant before the opportunity is afforded them to seek alternative accommodation.

Securing accommodation appears to be difficult in many cases. While the South Eastern Health Board does have a database of houses, the view was expressed that once potential landlords find out that those seeking accommodation are asylum seekers, many are not interested.

It would appear that there are massive discrepancies between the accommodations on offer. Also, not all houses are fully furnished. While the cost of renting accommodation is subsidised, "€15 subsistence, which is the allowance of each asylum seeker per week, is not enough to set up house, including furnishing it". There are also costs / problems associated with things like getting names on bills etc.

#### HEALTH

The men in general were happy with the service they were provided with. They spoke of a gap in service provision for torture victims.

The women highlighted the following issues:

#### DIET

Access to appropriate food and diet is a huge issue. The food here differs to what the asylum seekers are used to in their home countries. Some people find this difference difficult to get used to. This was an issue more for pregnant women than others. GPs are trying to support women around dietary issues.

#### DEPRESSION

Because of the restrictions imposed on asylum seekers in terms of what they are permitted to do and not do, there are few activities that the asylum seekers can become involved in. Arising from this, many suffer from depression. There is a lack of awareness of where to access support for depression.

#### ANTI-NATAL AND POST NATAL CARE

Asylum seekers have access to a service similar to that offered to Irish citizens. The main issue highlighted was the fact that the women attend appointments in St Luke's Hospital.

While in general this was not an issue, for those heavily pregnant, getting to the hospital at times proves problematic as the most common mode of transport is by foot. Living on such a low budget (€15/week does not allow for transport costs).

On attending appointments where treatment is provided which requires sedation, then a taxi allowance is given to return the women from the hospital. The women see this as positive.

#### CHILDCARE

While this is currently not an issue for those consulted with, as the women did not have children with them, the long term vision is that their children be integrated with children from the wider community in relation to childcare provision and also schooling.

#### SUPPORT STRUCTURE

There is a lack of a supportive structure in place at present for asylum seekers. This was highlighted in a number of ways.

On entering the country via the "Reception & Integration Department, Dublin", family and friends are very often dispersed to different locations throughout the country. This immediately causes extra stress and pressure on the asylum seekers.

There are few or no opportunities to keep in on-going contact

with family members in their home countries, or with family and friends transferred to Waterford or other locations in Ireland. Mobile phones are costly. The asylum seekers have very limited budgets, which do not lend to this contact being maintained.

For women, there is very little support given to those when giving birth. Two examples were given:

1. Women when in hospital, experience isolation and segregation as they lack the support from family and friends.
2. If no accommodation is secured prior to giving birth then on leaving the hospital, the woman and her baby are moved straight to Waterford hostel.

#### What would make a difference?

Asylum seekers are looking to be helped, understood, included & integrated into society.

#### INFORMATION

There is a huge need for greater understanding / information - creating awareness amongst the general public. There is a lack of understanding as to why people seek asylum.

There is a need for greater access to information for asylum seekers.

#### ACCESS TO WORK

Legislation to be relaxed in terms of permitting Asylum Seekers to work is regarded as a priority. If they could work, at least they would be contributing to the government and the Irish economy through paying taxes.

#### ACCESS TO TRAINING

Practical skills training was highlighted as the preferred option, to be provided on an informal basis, integrated with the wider community. However, the whole issue of language barriers needs to be considered to ensure that those with weak English are adequately catered for.

Costs to participate in courses is an issue, as is access to these courses. The group spoke of a course recently advertised in Carlow IT which was of interest to a number of the asylum seekers. However, they were not able to participate because of the costs involved and also transport to and from Carlow.

#### INVOLVEMENT WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Those spoken with, expressed a desire to become active and useful to society. They expressed an interest in a number of areas that they felt would assist them in this:

- To engage with volunteer groups and get involved with community development
- To get involved in training.



Chairman of the County Development Board, Michael Lanigan, at the launch of the Strategic Document, Parade Tower, Kilkenny.

#### PARTICIPATION RATES

Three issues were raised in relation to this matter:

1. There is an increasing challenge facing clubs and organisations throughout the county whereby more and more young people are

not engaging in many sports.

2. There is very low female participation in many sports. In many cases this was partly attributed to the poor / inadequate facilities available.

3. Volunteerism is on the decline and this, as with other areas in the community and voluntary sector, has its effect on the sporting clubs and organisations.

There was a strong view expressed that there is a need for more support and guidance to be provided for volunteers in their work, this support and guidance to be provided through:

- Training by way of one off seminars and information sessions for volunteers and their clubs.
- Provision of funding to clubs and organisations for hiring of coaches and trained personnel to work with clubs in supporting and guiding volunteers in their work.

It was felt that such support and guidance would go a long way to encouraging greater participation.  
Schools were identified as having an important role to play and the view was expressed of the need for fitness training to be given a

priority on the schools curriculum.

#### INSURANCE

This was seen as an issue affecting all sports groups with undue financial pressure continually being put on clubs and organisations to meet insurance costs.

Some clubs catering for people with disability are faced with the situation of not being able to secure insurances due to the nature of the sport they wish to operate. This leads to a situation of further isolation and segregation for those with a disability.

#### SOCIAL INCLUSION

The whole area of social inclusion arose in the discussion in terms of looking at how people with special needs can be integrated into sport participation. The general view expressed in relation to sport provision at present is that people with special needs, when participating in sport, are segregated and this needs to be addressed.

#### WORKING TOGETHER

There is a real need for sports clubs and organisations to work together for the common good of sport development. Currently sports clubs and organisations are

continuously competing against one another for limited funding, be it through fundraising or through seeking the same limited grant aid.

Yet in many cases the problems and issues they face are similar. By working together there is potential for such common issues to be tackled on a collective basis.

#### CULTURAL CHANGE NEEDED

A cultural change is needed at governmental / national level in terms of funding sport in Ireland.

Because sport is a non-mandatory function it is not given a priority at county level and this needs to change. The local authority and other relevant agencies need to address this issue not only from a funding point of view but also in terms of future planning of sport development for the county.

#### What now happens to this information?

The feedback received from this consultation will be used for two purposes. Firstly, it will go to inform the sports section of the County Development Board 10 Year Plan on "Social, Cultural & Economic Strategy" for County Kilkenny.

Secondly, the information will be fed into the current application that is being prepared for the Irish Sports Council "Local Sports Partnership" Initiative.

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#### Community and Voluntary Sector Representative's

- Strategic Policy Committee 1:** Eileen Sommer-Ronan, Ballyroe, Freshford  
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- Strategic Policy Committee 4:** Aidan Brennan, 1 St Canices Stepts, Church Lane Kilkenny.
- Strategic Policy Committee 5:** Vincent Dempsey, Kilree, Kells.



Discussion time after the launch of the Strategy for Economic Social and Cultural Development.