

# Wavelength

NEWS & INFORMATION FOR THE COMMUNITY & VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Issue No.2, Jan-Feb 2002

Well, here it is, the second installment of 'Wavelength', the bi-monthly news and information page for the community and voluntary sector. The County Kilkenny Community Forum is up and running for over two years now and with this in mind, it seems an appropriate time for review and reflection. What we need to assess is the way we deal with you, the community we represent, with the various committees and fora we represent, and the way we disseminate information and receive feedback from the community and voluntary groups throughout the county. The Community Forum is undertaking this review in a formal capacity with the help of facilitation, but we also need your feedback in order to gain a true picture of our effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) in steering through this process. Comments, opinions, however critical, are always welcome. In the meantime, happy New Year, and we wish you success in your endeavours for 2002.



Community Carers... discussing rural transport in County Kilkenny at the Castle Tower were (from left) Mary Hourigan, Clogh; Richard Rafter, Bus Eireann; Declan Rice BNS; Jackie Meally, Kilkenny Working Group; Nellie Brett, Gowran, Voluntary Sector and Mary Brennan, Ballyoskill, Voluntary Group. (Photo: Tom Brett)

Kilkenny County Development Board

## Public consultation meetings

SINCE April 2001, the Kilkenny County Development Board has embarked on a broad public consultation process to help formulate its County Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development 2002 to 2011.

A series of consultation meetings and workshops with groups throughout the county has resulted in a priority listing of issues that are of critical importance to both community, special interest groups and the general public in Kilkenny.

A total of 12 public community meetings and three special interest group workshops (for the elderly, the disabled and for the business sector) were conducted between April and June 2001.

The Board would like to acknowledge the involvement of all those concerned. We will be using this feedback to assist us in the formulation of the development plan for the county to frame a series of social, developmental and infrastructure strategies that will play a major role in shaping and improving our amenities, facilities and services in the future.

### Strategy developments

The purpose of the consultation meetings was to prepare recommendations for the County Development Board on the formulation of a County Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development 2002 to 2011.

The specific aims of this consultation process were:

- To develop a vision of where County Kilkenny should be in relation to the issue.
- To develop a set of realistic strategic objectives.

To outline the actions necessary to achieve these strategic objectives.

Consultations spanned areas such as industry, education, disability, equality, elderly, community supports, rural isolation, health, youth, sports and recreation, transport, infrastructure and cultural amenities.

People who attended the consultation meetings were asked to outline the core issues currently affecting them in their area, outlining what was working well and not working well. They were then asked to identify and prioritize three key actions that they felt would immediately impact on and improve their current situation.

The findings were as follows:

#### Key Issue in Information Services / Agencies / Local Authority:

- The need for better co-ordination activities between authorities, agencies, voluntary bodies etc. For improved access to information, a One Stop Shop.
- Public access to information, services and supports needs to be made more accessible and user-friendly.
- The lack of co-ordination and cohesion between service/support bodies.
- Improved facilities for access to information for special needs groups.
- Peripheral areas of the county feel neglected and marginalized in terms of general supports, service and amenity provisions. Perceived centralization of industry, amenities, services, supports in Kilkenny city.
- Town and village development plans are needed and not just for Kilkenny city.
- Access to information for

special needs groups and interpreter facility for the deaf community.

#### Infrastructure key issue:

- Increased and strategic investment in infrastructure required in provision of roads, telecommunications and service provision to sustain / increase economic development on a county-wide basis.
- Local Authority Planning needs to be more proactive, constructive and transparent.
- Housing developments to be more sympathetic to the local environment, and an end to ribbon development. The provision of affordable housing for locals was a key issue and increased provision of zoned/industrial space.

#### Roads

Concern was expressed in the following areas: the routing of primary routes, poor quality of roads particularly in county areas, traffic congestion in both county and city, poor state of roads and footpaths in county areas and better road markings for elderly, special needs.

Public Transport was felt to be inadequate, with a deficit in public service provision in both city and county.

The lack of transport increased feelings of exclusion among the elderly, special needs, youth and those in rural/peripheral areas of the county.

Improved access to public transport was required (hand railings etc.) for elderly and special needs.

#### In the provision of services:

- The poor quality of drinking water particularly in

peripheral areas of the county, inadequate supplies and 'end of lifespan' sewerage provisions were issues, as were waste and recycling provisions, which were lacking on a countywide basis.

The cost of waste collection in both city and county is prohibitive. A sliding scale based on weight was suggested particularly for the elderly/single homeowners.

#### Cultural key issue:

The revitalization of existing natural and physical amenities.

Physical amenities: Upgrade in the amenity value of river(s) required, as in slipways and walkways along river(s) for improved community and tourism amenities. The flooding problems particularly in peripheral county areas were identified.

Cultural/heritage properties to be further developed, dereliction of historic sites/buildings we need to identify alternative uses for properties.

#### Key issue in industry

The strategic development of light industrial based industries for county areas, capable of sustaining local labour force. Sustained investment in infrastructure supports for city.

The inadequate provision of work for special needs groups was identified. Tourism and arts/crafts to be further developed particularly in county areas, and to develop Kilkenny as a regional gateway.

#### Education key issue:

Third level facilities for Kilkenny, Special needs edu-

cation provision to reduce necessity of migration to Dublin and increased out-reach /adult education opportunities, particularly in the area of IT. The cost of child-care and lack of facilities was identified.

#### Healthcare key issue:

The lack of supports in all areas of the county, including home for elderly/ step down facilities and sheltered housing.

A more equitable and efficient healthcare system required, currently two-tiered (private/public).

A home for the elderly required for the city. St. Columbas, Thomastown, is excellent but access is a problem. Lack of supports in peripheral areas - a one-stop health/ophthalmic/dental centers suggested.

Sheltered housing and better supports for independent living.

#### Community supports key issue:

Utilizing existing buildings to create a heart for communities, as social, recreational, educational, cultural and special needs venues.

City and countywide need for shared community centers/halls with recreational facilities for a variety of uses (elderly, youth, adult education, special needs groups etc.). Need for a nucleus for community/social cohesion.

## South East rural transport audit

THE COUNTY Kilkenny Workshop was held in the Parade Tower, Kilkenny Castle, on Thursday of last week.

The workshop was organised by Kilkenny County Development Board and facilitated by WSP, 125 Lower Baggot St. Dublin.

Each County Development Board is currently in the process of carrying out a rural transport audit in its county. The process involves the gathering of information on the precise nature, scale and negative impact, the absence of adequate rural transport services have on communities, the marginalised and the disadvantaged in society.

### Carlow, Kilkenny and South Tipperary Rural Transport Company Ltd

This company was established in September of 2001 to represent the shared interests of community / social concerns groups, local development organizations and statutory organizations in

the task of providing adequate public transport for the rural dwellers of those counties.

BNS Rural Development Group was one of the primary movers in the formation of the company and holds a seat on the company Board of Directors, as do four from the Rural Transport Action Group in each of the three counties.

The nominees to the Board of Directors from the County Kilkenny Rural Transport Steering Group are:

Sinead Foskin, c/o The Irish Wheelchair Association, College Road, Kilkenny.

Tomás Breathnach, Narra-bane, Kilmacow.

Brahim Lergate, Camphill Community, Ballytobin.

Jackie Meally, Ban Óg, Castlecomer.

The company is currently awaiting the announcement of the result of their application to the Department of Public Enterprise "Rural Transport Initiative" fund in December. Thanks to FÁS Social Economy Programme, the company appointed Ms Mary Merrick as its manager. Mary can be contacted at 056 52111.

## Council makes progress on recycling

IN RECENT months, Kilkenny Co Council placed a number of bring centers units around the county.

The current number of glass and aluminum drink can bottle banks in Kilkenny County has increased to twenty-six. It is proposed to increase this number to thirty-two by the end January 2002

It is proposed that ten new banks for food tins will be provided in the next few months.

Six paper and plastic recycling facilities were put in place for the Christmas period. Due to abuse of four of these sites, they were relocated. An assessment will be completed on these sites at the end of the month.



Preparing for Arts Week Parade '01, Aisling Barry, Kilkenny.

## Public consultation process

TWO public meetings were set up as a consultation exercise in order to help compile a submission to the public consultation paper 'The National Spatial Strategy - Indications for the Way Ahead'. It is hoped that it will be of benefit to refining and framing more detailed spatial policies in the strategy.

The meetings were held in Kilkenny city and Mullinavat, the attendants were organized into workshops and a Council official was assigned to each group to stimulate debate and seek their views.

The general consensus at the meetings was that nobody opted for the 'stand still / do nothing' option. There was a strong recognition that balanced regional development was needed as promoted under the National Spatial Strategy.

### Community and Voluntary Sector Representative's

- Strategic Policy Committee 1:** Eileen Sommer-Ronan, Ballyroe, Freshford; Afra Cronin, Hazelwood, Christendom, Ferrybank.
- Strategic Policy Committee 2:** Martin Riches, Brookside Cottage, Flood Hall, Knocktopher.
- Strategic Policy Committee 3:** Pat Durkin, 5 Riverview, Bennettsbridge.
- Strategic Policy Committee 4:** Aidan Brennan, 1 St Canices Stepts, Church Lane Kilkenny.
- Strategic Policy Committee 5:** Vincent Dempsey, Kilree, Kells.

## Kilkenny arts strategy

A BROAD cross-section of Kilkenny's arts community has come together to thrash out a vision for arts development in Co Kilkenny for the next ten years.

The group, involving individual artists, arts organizations, youth and community arts workers and members of amateur societies, are taking up the challenge to the community and voluntary sectors to become involved in inputting to the County Development Plan for Kilkenny.

Following two initial meetings of a focus group, a

document was circulated identifying key issues for an arts strategy for Kilkenny.

An open meeting took place in County Hall in early December, attended by nearly fifty members of the wider arts community, including visual artists, theatre practitioners, writers, and those involved in dance, film, music, youth arts, and arts management.

The meeting focused on the current needs of Kilkenny's arts community, citing the poverty of arts infrastructure, poor budget and low priority given to the arts at local government level.

However, it was also accepted that the arts community in Kilkenny is very fragmented, with poor networking and little interdisciplinary contact or activity.

It was agreed that a representative group would meet to draft an outline submission to the County Development Plan.

The first of these meetings took place in County Hall on January 7. It focused on the current state of the arts in Kilkenny, as a first stage in a process of identifying where the arts should be in ten years and the steps needed to get there.

It was a lively and energetic affair with participants eagerly discussing areas of joint interest and common concern and possibilities for cross-disciplinary initiatives.

There was a strong sense that there is much that the arts community can do for itself if it acts together and an agreement that an arts strategy must be developed in the context of the contribution the arts can make to the wider community in Co. Kilkenny.

Further meetings will take place in the course of the next two months. Anyone who is interested in contributing to the process should contact Margaret Cosgrave (Arts Officer) at Kilkenny County Council 056-526999 or Vincent Dempsey (Community Liaison Committee) 087-2746036.



Wheelchair Angel Day Campaign '01. Dennis Coady, Gaignamanagh, Rose Marie Doody, Piltown.

## Consultation meeting for the elderly

THIRTY EIGHT people from various clubs and groups for older people participated in a consultation session as part of a series of seminars run by Kilkenny Social Services. The same format was followed for this meeting as for all of the other meetings asking three key questions:

- What are the key things that are happening that are impacting on your life?
- What's working well, what's not working well?
- What are the 3 most important changes that would make a difference?

#### Health Care Issues

A two tier health care system was a strong and widely expressed issue. Long waiting lists was still the predominant experience at this meeting. It was felt that those with access to health insurance have direct access to care without waiting and those without insurance experience long waiting lists.

Step down facilities are not available. Even those that are listed as available in fact never materialise.

Mixed sexes in wards was not popular. People felt that it put additional pressure on people already under stress being in hospital. It should be a short-term emergency policy, but future planning for facilities should ensure that single sex accommodation is planned for.

#### Nursing Homes

A home for the elderly in Kilkenny City as part of the health care system is required. St Columbas in Thomastown is seen as a model of good practice in terms of care, but its location is problematic because of its geographical accessibility.

People from Kilkenny are isolated from friends and neighbours who are not in a position to visit because there is no public transport available.

There is a need to build better supports and checks to ensure that good quality care is developing in the private sector. It is not good enough just to let the market dictate. Stronger conditions in terms of the quality of care being provided should be put in place.

#### Independent Living

People stressed the importance of being able to remain living independently for as long as possible, but felt that it was difficult to get the supports to make this happen. Better and more accessible supports were needed in four areas:

Better supports for maintaining and upgrading property, such as replacing windows, heating etc. were also stressed. Better care supports and home helps are needed. What is available currently is too limited. Better and more accessible transport (this is dealt with

in more detail later).

Better supports to deal with isolation, access to social clubs and in particular the need for resource centres that would address the needs of older people was stressed as a need.

Access to information was also a key issue. It was felt that in some cases supports were available, but the information was not made public and it is dependent on stumbling on it rather than seeing it as a right.

Transport issues were raised strongly as key issues affecting older people. In particular transport to health services was raised as a very specific issue. Transport to Waterford Regional Hospital causes particular difficulties.

The lack of transport in rural areas leads to isolation and people not being able access services and amenities.

Transport within Kilkenny City was also a difficulty. The existing bus is limited in times and the route offered. Other areas of the city have no transport at all.

#### Women's contribution

The point was made strongly that women's contribution is still not valued in society. This is especially true for older women who carry the burden of caring for adult children and grandchildren without recognition.

#### Crime

One workshop in particular focused on the issue of the impact of crime on older people. Older people have a range of concerns in relation to personal safety both inside and outside the home. Fears of personal attack when walking or shopping were expressed. People were also fearful of break-ins and attacks in the home.

#### Refuse charges

The way refuse charges are organised and the rate charged was a strong issue. People felt that refuse should be paid for on a by weight basis. This is much more equitable for older people who have small amounts of waste compared to families.

People were dissatisfied with the disparity between County Council and Corporation policies in relation to waivers.

#### Recycling

The lack of recycling facilities in County Kilkenny was raised both in Kilkenny City and rural areas. A positive suggestion was put forward, which is outlined below.

#### What's working well

The city looks well. Pedestrian crossings and ramps in estates - more are needed. This kind of consultation is very positive. The seminars organised by Kilkenny Social Services have worked well.

Day care is working well in some areas.

St Columba's in Thomastown is a model of good practice in care for the elderly.

#### Some suggestions for positive action

- Put recycling facilities near churches in rural areas. This would facilitate older people who already have organised transport to church to bring items for recycling.
- An area maintenance person/caretaker that would be specifically available to assist with basic maintenance of property.
- Circle of friends, a group of eight to ten people who will visit each other on a rotational basis to address the issue of loneliness and isolation.
- Resource centres in rural areas which would help deal with rural isolation.

#### The most important changes:

- A more equitable and efficient health care system
- Better supports for independent living
- A home for the elderly in Kilkenny, based on the St Columba's model
- Better Transport facilities, and in particular in rural areas
- Refuse, pay by weight and better recycling facilities
- Resource centres designed to meet the needs of older people.

### County Development Board - Staff Team:

- Tony Walsh - Director of Community & Enterprise
- Brid Hynes - Community & Enterprise Officer
- Helen Landers - Community & Enterprise Officer Tel 056 526999 Website: www.kilkennycdb.ie Email: cdb@kilkennycoco.ie
- Representing the Community and Voluntary Sector:
- Ann Marie Irish, Anville, Nicholastown, Slieverue.
- Nellie Brett, Main Street, Gowran.

A report on the key issues raised at public consultation meetings with women will be published in the next issue of Wavelength.

If you wish to respond to this page e-mail you comments to: nbrett@oceanfree.net