

Balanced Regional Development ~ Western Alliance

The ‘Balancing Regional Development’ Conference will be held on October 22nd and 23rd at the Bunratty Shannon Shamrock Hotel. Disabled People of Clare (DPOC) will offer free transport to persons with disabilities from Limerick/Ennis Bus and Train Stations or Shannon Airport to the conference venue.

The conference is being organized in association with the ‘Western Alliance,’ of Community and Voluntary Fora.

The Clare Community Forum is the recognised structure for the community and voluntary sector in County Clare whose twenty-five members of the Forum are drawn from Clare's five Electoral Areas. The countywide group consists of representatives from all interested community and voluntary groups in the county.

The Clare Community Forum aims to help identify and agree county-wide issues and proposals and develop integrated responses to the particular needs of the community and voluntary sector in the county; develop an effective network to enable the community and voluntary sector to meet and articulate common concerns; develop proposals for the enhanced participation of the community and voluntary sector in various development initiatives; and contribute to the policy development of the Clare County Development Board through its various structures.

*Further information on the Conference is available from **061-713605** or*

086-38632634 or e-mail: ccforum@eircom.net

County/City Development Boards

County/City Development Boards (CDBs) were established in each of the 34 County/City Councils in 2000, as a government response to the challenge of better integration of public and local service delivery. They comprise representatives from the four key sectors of local government, local development, the social partners and state agencies. The main function of the boards is to bring about the more co-ordinated delivery of public and local development services at local level. The boards are chaired by a local authority elected member, and are serviced from within the local authorities by Directors of Service for Community and Enterprise and their staff.

One of the core functions of the Boards was to draw up and oversee the implementation of an agreed “*Shared Vision*” or Strategy for their respective counties and cities. “*Vision*” refers to a view of how the area involved is to develop economically, socially and culturally over a ten-year horizon, and what actions are needed to achieve this. “*Shared*” reflects the fact that this vision is to be agreed between all the individual organisations on the local CDB. The CDB Strategies, which were published in 2002, are the key vehicles through which improved local service co-ordination is to be achieved.

CDBs completed a review of their strategies in early 2006, and defined priorities for the next three years with an emphasis on integrated delivery of services by participating agencies.

Towards 2016 contains a commitment to strengthen and develop the CDBs to ensure that they can operate effectively as a vehicle for supporting a more integrated approach to service delivery at local level.

For further information on the CDB process and to access related publications:

<http://www.cdb.ie/index1.htm>

Community and Voluntary Fora

Community and Voluntary Fora were established in each city and county (34 in all) in 2000 as part of the County/City Development Board (**CDB**) process. The Fora have an important role to play in facilitating the community in making an input into the **CDB** process, including their County/City Strategies for Economic, Social and Cultural Development, as well as the local authority Strategic Policy Committees (**SPCs**).

Public sector agencies are also encouraged to consult with local fora when seeking feedback on their policy proposals and proposals on related initiatives at local level. Fora are directly supported by local authorities through Directors of Community & Enterprise and their staff. The fora are required to operate in a democratic, accountable and transparent manner. Each forum is also required to maintain a constitution and rules of membership that are open and transparent.

Each forum reflects the wider community in the county/city. In line with the commitment in the Government White Paper Supporting Voluntary Activity, this Department provides annual funding to the fora (€1.312m was provided to the 34 fora in 2006). The funding is used to support the work of the fora in organising meetings, communicating information and providing capacity building, training and support for Forum members, particularly those representing the socially excluded.

Review of the Fora

A review of the work of the Fora was carried out by a Working Group of Directors of Community & Enterprise and chaired by the Department in 2003, following which further guidance issued to the Fora (via local authorities) in April 2004. The main recommendations emanating from the review, centred around best practice and ensuring that Fora continue to operate in a democratic and accountable manner and that they remain focused and vibrant.

National Community and Voluntary Forum

The Irish National Community and Voluntary Forum (**INCVF**) is the national body representative of County/City fora. It was established in November 2003 and operates in a democratic, transparent and accountable manner.

The Forum's main role and function include:

- * To act as a representative voice for fora countrywide,
- * To act as an information conduit on models of best practice and to disseminate information on innovative ideas
- * To establish links between and provide support to local fora, and
- * To establish links at a national level.

Social Inclusion Units

In line with a commitment in the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (2000), social inclusion units were established on a pilot basis in seven local authorities (Cork, Limerick, and Waterford City Councils, and Louth, Wicklow, Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown and South Dublin County Councils) for the period 2001-2005. The Department provided over €1m per

annum (€4.5m in the period 2002 to 2005) to support the programme. Dublin City Council had a unit prior to the establishment of the pilots and received funding under the programme. The pilot units were placed on a permanent footing in 2006.

The main role of the units is to support the local authorities' involvement in tackling social exclusion across the range of their activities in a focused and cohesive manner, including working with other public bodies. The units are also seen as a key mechanism for embedding the National Anti-Poverty Strategy in and across local authority actions, policies and initiatives and in developing a strong anti-poverty focus within local government practice and policy.

In line with a commitment in Towards 2016, the social inclusion unit programme will be extended to half of all county/city local authorities by the end of 2008.

Social & Community Facilities Capital Scheme

A new Social & Community Facilities Capital Scheme was established and rolled out in 2006 to fund targeted capital developments, carried out through local authorities, which are designed to enhance communities, address disadvantage and improve social cohesion at a local level.

In May 2006, each County and City Council was invited to submit three project proposals (prepared in consultation with the elected council members and the community) for consideration under the scheme. These applications were rigorously and objectively appraised against assessment criteria set out in the scheme.

In July 2006, the Minister approved funding of one project in each of the 34 county and city council areas, at a total cost of €7.4m over a 2-year period (2006/2007).

The types of projects approved included:

- * The upgrade of community and resource centres;
- * Youth facilities;
- * Arts and culture centre improvements;
- * Community sports facilities;
- * Local authority estate enhancements including park & amenity areas;
- * Town & village improvements.

Publications & Documents

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/>

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