

TRIBE VIBES

Newsletter of Galway City Community Forum

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GCCF Strategic Plan 2006-2008 by Nollaig McGuinness

Galway City Community Forum is pleased to launch its new Strategic Plan 2006-2008 which has been developed over the past number of months with Forum members. The Strategic Plan sets an ambitious agenda for the Forum itself, for local agencies and for the wider community over the coming years.

- Community Recreation Space
- Community Development
- Planning Policy
- Public Transport
- Environmental Protection
- Local Identity & Heritage
- Housing
- Law and Order

Once identified, each of these issues were examined and discussed and a number of specific actions proposed for each aimed at bringing about the types of change and development that are deemed necessary.

The new plan builds on the previous strategic plan and on the Forum's Policy Document. At the heart of the plan are the key 'community issues' in Galway City which were identified through open consultation with Forum members. The key issues identified for the coming years are:

For more information and copies of the new GCCF Strategic Plan 2006-2008 please contact the Community Forum Co-ordinator.

galway city
community forum
forum pobal chathair na gaillimhe

The views expressed in this Newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of Galway City Community Forum or the Community & Enterprise Department of Galway City Council.

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Árus na nGael

By Norma Jean Kenny



Tá beár /club Árus na nGael suite lastiar den árus ar Shráid Doimínic a bhí i seilbh muintir na Bantiarna Greagóir (Lady Gregory) tráth. Bhí sise ar cheann de phríomhphearsana náisiúnachas cultúrtha na 19ú haoise déanaí, as ar shíolraigh Athbheochan na Gaeilge. D'oscail an t-ionad fiche bliain ó shin agus arcochadh timpeall na mballaí feictear pictiúir agus póstaerí frámaíthe d'ealaíona na Gaeilge; drámaí, imeachtaí, féilte, ceoltóirí, damhsóirí agus scríbhneoirí. Is áit theasa agus teolaí é, le tine curtha síos sa tinteán ar feadh an Gheimhridh. Má bhíonn oíche antláis ag teastáil nó deoch le comhrá ciúin, is é seo an t-ionad. Tá ceann de na hurláir damhsa is fearr i nGaillimh sa seomra lena thaobh.

Bíonn rangannaí Gaeilge a bhíonn ar siúl thuas staighre le gach leibhéal san áireamh: Glan tosaitheoirí-ard leibhéal. Tá an rang do ghlan-tosaitheoirí oiriúnach duit murar fhoghlaim tú an Ghaeilge riamh. Thosaigh go leor daoine ó thíortha eile ag foghlaim na Gaeilge sa rang seo agus lean siad ar aghaidh go leibhéal níos airde. Nuair a bhíonn an téarma ranganna ar siúl bíonn oíche na bhfoghlaimoirí ar siúl sa chlub. Tá seo le haghaidh foghlaimoirí na Gaeilge i gCathair na Gaillimhe a bheas ag iarraidh deis chun an Ghaeilge a labhairt go rialta in atmasféar taitneamhach neamhfhoirmeálta. Ar feadh na bliana, bíonn go leor imeachtaí ar siúl le haghaidh lucht foghlama agus labhartha na Gaeilge, mar shampla, tráth an gceist.

Bíonn an Club leabhar ar siúl gach mí, ag bualadh le chéile chun leabhair as Gaeilge a phlé.

Cuirtear an cúlútráidisiúnta Gaelach in iúil ar mhórán slite, trí damhsa agus ceol freisin; bíonn neart stíleana fós ag athcruthaigh agus foirmeacha nua ag éirí as. Is seanstíl rince Ghaelach atá i gceist leis an damhsa ar an sean-nós, coitianta go háirithe I gConamara. Is damhsa indibhidiúil é, á léiriú trí shraith céimeanna ag cur in iúl le na cosa. Bíonn ranganna damhsa ar an sean-nós, tosaitheoirí agus feabhsóirí, ar siúl go minic sa Chlub.

Bíonn fáilte ar gach stíl damhsa ar an Oíche Dé hAois i gClub Oa2, lonnaithe san Árus na nGael ar feadh ceithre bliain anois. Tá Gaillimh athshondach le cheoil agus ratháionn Oa2 ar na teicneolaíoch nua meáscan den ceoil agus damhsa a bhíonn ag teacht amach as na cultúirí difriúla. Ach, má bhíonn ceol traidisiúnta Ghaelach ar thóir, bíonn seisiún ceol traidisiúnta den scoth ar siúl gach Oíche Shathairn. Is seisiún oscailte é seo, agus fáilte roimh ceoltóirí, éisteoirí agus damhsóirí.

The Árus na nGael bar/club is situated behind the house on Dominic Street that once belonged to Lady Gregory, one of the key figures of the late 19th Century cultural nationalism which gave rise to the Gaelic Revival. The venue opened twenty years ago and the framed posters and photographs around the walls are of

the Irish language arts; plays, festivals, musicians, dancers and writers. It's a cosy spot with a fire lit throughout the winter. If a night of revellery and merrymaking is required, or just a quiet drink and conversation, this is the place. The adjoining room has one of the best dancefloors in Galway.

Irish classes take place upstairs and caters for all levels: Complete beginners to higher levels. The absolute beginners class is suitable if you have never learnt Irish before. Many people from other countries have begun learning Irish in this class and then progressed on to other levels. When the term of classes is on, there is a facilitated learners night in the club. This gives learners of Irish in Galway the opportunity to meet with other learners and speak Irish in an informal and relaxed atmosphere. Throughout the year there are many events such as table quizzes for learners and speakers of Irish. The book club meets monthly to discuss and review an Irish language book.

Traditional Gaelic culture has many expressions through dance and music; many of these traditional styles are still evolving and new forms emerging. Sean-nós dancing is an old style of Gaelic dancing particularly popular in the Connemara area. It is an individualistic form of dance that is performed through a series of steps expressing the rhythm through the feet. Sean-nós dancing classes for beginners and improvers, take place regularly at Árus na nGael.

All forms of dance are welcome on a Friday night, where Club Oa2 is now into its fourth year of residency in Árus na nGael. Galway resonates with music and Oa2 continues to thrive on the emerging new technological mixtures of music and dance forms of different cultures. If its traditional Irish music you are after, Saturday night in Árus na nGael holds some of the best sessions in town, with an open welcome to musicians, listeners and dancers.

This article was printed in the Autumn edition of Tribevibes but was credited in error to Brian McNamara. We extend our apologies to Norma-Jean Kenny and have reprinted the full article in her name.

learningpoint.ie
your one-stop-shop for training

All you ever wanted to know about training but were afraid to ask .

learningpoint.ie, is a central fully searchable web-based sign-posting service providing a single source of accurate, up-to-date information about training opportunities throughout the Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland. After several months of development, it was launched by The Wheel at the end of September. Since then learningpoint.ie has grown to contain information on over 350 training providers and more than 850 relevant training courses. The website is being maintained and monitored by The Wheel, and information on even more training providers and courses is being added on an on-going basis.

learningpoint.ie is freely accessible to anyone who works in Ireland's Community and Voluntary Sector, looking for information about training. Users can search for suitable training courses and providers depending on their location and area of work. learningpoint.ie also provides extensive information on training news and events, publications and useful web links.

The rationale for its development originated from an independent research study of the training needs of the community and voluntary sector published in August 2005. This study is the first research of its kind in Ireland and it surveyed attitudes to training needs and provision - whether of paid employees or of unpaid volunteers. One of the recommendations made was that given the high level of recognition of training as a strategic priority within the sector, a key development would be the signposting of training provision targeted at the local, regional and national levels. Learningpoint.ie is The Wheel's response to this recommendation and it is already proving to be a huge hit amongst all sizes of organisations and groups.

THE IRISH RUSSIAN-EUROPEAN CLUB

By Brian MacNamara



The Irish Russian-European Club, which has been in operation since May of 2005, is a Galway-based organisation that aims to both unify and strengthen the voice of the various Russian-speakers now living in the area, and to assist in their integration into the broader local community. Founded jointly by Vladislav Tikahonov and Olga Mezkuzjeva, both former members of the ethnic Russian community of Kazakhstan, the organisation holds weekly meetings each Sunday evening at No. 1, The Plaza, Headford Road. Having initially widely advertised its existence, the club, whose full title is 'Centre of Cultural Union and Social Initiatives', was warmly received by the local Russian-speaking communities. Despite encountering early problems due to lack of sufficient funding, the club has since built up a broad membership that includes former citizens of such countries as Russia, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia, and Syria.

While endeavouring to overcome the various obstacles that its members regularly encounter as an exiled community, Vladislav describes the club as being open to each of those cultural voices within its composition. The club particularly concerns itself with employment-related issues, and matters relating to childcare for those without extended family support. Vladislav considers one of the main problems all immigrant communities in Galway have to contend with to be a lack of community space in which to gather. He believes this hinders the communities' ability to retain their traditional languages for future generations. He then translates an old Russian proverb: 'The richest person morally is the person who thinks in his own language'. Vladislav then points to the fact that Irish society is also trying to preserve its ancestral tongue. Another problem that exists, however, regards a lack of language support facilities for some to properly learn the local language.

In addition to tackling practical matters, the club also organises a number of social events for its members. These have included social excursions into the surrounding countryside,

one of which was a recent trip to Cong. In addition, the Irish Russian-European Club holds a special event to mark its members' former region's most celebrated holiday; the New Year. As in 2005, the 2006 event is to take place in the Menlo Park Hotel. However, while the 2005 event was particularly lavish, and open to all, with preparations having begun almost two months beforehand, the 2006 party will be for club members only, so as to reduce the organisational work load. Nonetheless, Russia's Santa Claus ('the Frozen Grandfather') and his helper grand-daughter are expected to make an appearance, along with a host of other seasonal figures from that tradition. Vladislav describes how a total of twelve days of national holiday surround the Russian New Year, which conclude on the Russian Orthodox Christmas Day of January 8th.

At the time of the club's establishment, Vladislav estimates there to have been approximately two thousand Russian-speakers of various nationalities living in the Galway City region. He believes that figure to have since risen sharply. In his opinion, most of the longer established Russian-speakers in the area wish to set down long-term roots, while the majority of those now entering may wish only to remain for a limited period. As such, he considers those that have arrived more recently to be by and large less interested in matters concerned with long-term community development. Vladislav also believes the local community to have been more accepting of strangers into the area prior to the recent upsurge in migrant workers entering the region. Furthermore, he feels it would be beneficial for all concerned if the Irish Russian-European Club were able to establish better working relations with local State agencies as he believes the latter to be in danger of losing touch with what is happening on the ground within the community. He is particularly concerned about the lack of support for older people and teenagers amongst the transplanted community.

New members are always welcome at the Irish Russian-European Club. For further details of the club, please contact 087 0566322.

Galway City Museum by Jenny McLoughlin

Galway City Museum is open to the public on a temporary basis, prior to the installation of the permanent exhibition in early 2007. The temporary opening is mainly about showing off the museum building, which is the city's newest and most exciting architectural space. There are three temporary exhibitions at present:

- (a) Fragments of a City - featuring Galway's medieval stone collection;
- (b) The Bank of Ireland's modern art collection featuring works by Louis Le Brocquay, John Behan and others
- (c) "Images of Chicago: A Spectacle of Urban Life at the Water's Edge": 50 Color Photographs which create a vivid portrait of artistic and architectural excellence, community and cultural celebration in Chicago. (Sister Cities International Program / Chicago-Galway Committees)

Galway City Museum is also honoured to house the famous statue of Padraic O Conaire carved by Albert Power. Visitors can also enjoy 'Muse Café' within the museum building, which serves delicious food and affords excellent views of Galway City, particularly the world-famous Claddagh area.

The museum's permanent collection will be unveiled after Christmas and will focus on the history and identity of the City, and we also have an area for temporary exhibitions that will change on a regular basis. Community involvement and community ownership is at the forefront of the museum's agenda. A community focus group that represents a wide section of the city's population have been widely consulted on the museum's development. Each member of this group will also choose an object that they feel should be included in Galway City Museum. These objects will form part of Galway City Museum's permanent collection

For further information on Galway City Museum please contact 091 532464.



The museum's permanent collection will be unveiled after Christmas and will focus on the history and identity of the City

Fitness Starts With Us

An interview with Galway's New Sports Development Officer. **By Sandra Bunting**

Interview



Galway's first sports development officer has settled into his new job after taking up the position in April. His arrival has been greatly applauded as for a long time local sports groups have been asking for someone to co-ordinate sporting groups and facilities and to encourage more physical activity in the city.

In the few months that Jason Craughwell has been in the job, he has accomplished a lot. Focusing in bringing attention to what we do have he said: "Galway already has a lot of facilities. People just don't know about them."

Mr. Craughwell's plan is two-fold:

- To support competitive and structured sport
- To focus on the fun aspect of sport, the pure enjoyment of it

Recognising that Galway is fortunate in having a lot of people putting time into structured clubs, he aims to develop the more informal side to

physical activity. To this end he is hoping to encourage volunteers to set up other clubs for sports and physical fitness by training games leaders and coaches who can learn skills and bring them back to the community.

A lot can be done very simply. There are many open areas in estates. "These are the places where kids can start getting physical activity through various games," he said.

A website will soon provide information on what's available in Galway in terms of clubs and other forms of physical activity. This will also include the arts as complementary to sports, especially areas such as modern dance which is active and physically demanding.

Already he has managed to secure 3000 worth of equipment through RAPID. This is divided into 5 kits or RAPS (recreation, activity and play bags) which contain footballs, basketballs, tennis equipment, hockey sticks, bean bags and soft balls to name a few. With one RAP in each of the 5 RAPID areas in the city, the idea is to make physical activity more fun and more inclusive. Any community group can sign it out. Therefore it is hoped that participation will increase. For example, there is the competitive rugby and the fun tag rugby, competitive soccer and 'five aside'. In one the emphasis is on winning; on the other, winning is important but the social and entertainment aspects also highly considered.

Galway will soon have a government-funded sports partnership. At the moment there are 16 in the country and it is hoped to have one in every county and major city by the year 2008. Initially it will exist for three years at which time it will be reviewed.

In the meantime, besides providing support to members of the community interested in training, a series of workshops with all sports groups were held in November to set out objectives of the future sports partnership over the next two to three years. We are awaiting the results of a sports and recreation needs analysis

Jason Craughwell is not a stranger to what this city needs in terms of encouragement for sport and physical activity. A native of Athlone, he has worked in Galway in the fitness industry and had family connections to the city centre. With a degree in Health, Fitness, Leisure and Physical Education at the IT, Tralee, he has 8-10 level one coaching qualifications allowing him to coach a broad spectrum of sports. He was involved in athletics and gymnastics and played rugby and a little soccer.

With the help of the community and the encouragement and support of our new Sports Development Officer, Galway is hopefully on the way to being fitter and with a more positive attitude towards sport and physical activity.

Poetry Corner



Dawn Arrival

Lemon-rind moon.
The road is mine,
but the town belongs
to the crows
swooping low across the
litter-filled square.
Early birds, earlier even
than the Brazilians
who huddle in the wing
mirror against the chill,
heads turning at the rumble
of diesel engines
that accelerate past them
on to the open road.

Letters fall from my name
on a shabby shop-front
in this, the seat of my tribe.
The dawn, tentative,
picks its way west lit by
hawthorn bush, reluctant
clouds blush, then dissolve
into blue. A jet-stream
cuts space in two,
crooked horizon between
sky and sky
as your plane makes its
steady descent,
an early returning
migrant, drawn by the
gravitational pull of home

Lorna Shaughnessy

European Youth Parliament, Ukraine, 2006: A Galway Delegate's View by J. Brown

The Trip

Our eleven-strong team was the largest that Ireland had yet sent to such an event. We were all vaguely familiar with each other (from Dublin, Cork, and, of course, the Wesht) from regional and national conferences as well as serving on the same committees.

We arrived at Kiev Airport after twelve hours travelling, and a stop-over in Milan, before being transported for the team-building weekend. It was too dark to make out the city at this stage. On arrival to the "resort" at some forsaken hour of the night, we were greeted by a giant arch embossed with Lenin's head and the Red Star. At this moment, all western reality left us and we become entrenched in this ex-Soviet Bloc dream of borsch, leather jackets and copious amounts of cigarettes and vodka (not us, the locals!).

We spent two days there engaged in team-building and special events. Team-building prevents the exercise being too serious and dull and ensures the committee gels and that the discussion is calm, intelligent, amusing and respectful of the others. No organisation I've been involved in does it better than EYP. There was "Eurovillage", where all the countries set up a stall with the best things from their countries; Ireland had Guinness, potatoes, free leprechaun hats and gloves. Then there were country & committee presentations, which involved a dance or play about how great (or not) your country was. We treated them to a glorious rendition of an Irish dance taught to us in about two hours by Katie, one of the delegates who happened to be quite skilled in the art. Leaving the next morning, we walked past the mural depicting a happy couple and their child with the Cyrillic reading "healthy family make wealthy nation". We already felt the bizarre mixture of relief and reluctance to leave such a unique place.

Down to Business

Arriving at the opening ceremony for the 53rd International Session of the EYP, unshowered (no hot water, uncombed and exhausted, our sleep-deprived mettle was tested with almost two hours of speeches from the Ukrainian Minister For Youth & Family, Eurovision Winner 2004, Ruslana Lyzhychko and others. Then we got settled in our hotel and began the serious committee work. I stayed with the Estonian from my committee, a huge 6'7" blonde Norse called Josepp who was one of the funniest guys I'd met, a French guy called Todor who was very calm and talkative in both languages and a Romanian called Alexander who spent more time ironing his Versace suit, combing his hair back and practising the pan pipes than speaking.

Committee work was productive, interspersed with the occasional game with a rival committee to liven things up a bit. This went on for three days with a

celebratory committee dinner at the end in one of Kiev's exquisite restaurants. The next day, we had a nice tour around Kyiv with the rest of the Irish before attending the EuroConcert that night. This was a highlight of the whole experience, as delegates with musical talent got up and played some fantastic music for us in the National Symphonic Orchestra Theatre right next to the government buildings, the main square and the all the national monuments. The night was formal, so we were in our tuxedos and dresses, looking absolutely stunning.

At conferences such as these, several topics are chosen beforehand and, through random selection, given out. Each committee then has so much time to draft up a resolution - akin to the official procedure of the real European Parliament and innumerable other parliaments across the world. After the resolutions have been written and typed up, they are then presented to the General Assembly, debated and voted on to see whether they will pass or not. Each committee has a defence speech and anyone can make an attack speech on the resolution before going to the floor for open debate.

Things were different at the Kyiv International Session (KIS) as instead of the usual long weekend as it is in Ireland, it was a full eight days. We finished our resolution on the Eurozone Membership Criteria and the case for their reconsideration. General Assembly - the true meat of the week- was held over the Friday and Saturday and was an excellent two days of discussion, debating and learning. Our resolution passed with the highest level of abstentions in the votes, probably due to the fact that an understanding of economics is not a common thing for your average eighteen year old. Only three out of the fifteen failed, Foreign Affairs II on Israel and Lebanon due to its insistence on sending EU troops over right away and the ensuing attacks by myself and a German with whom I had brokered an alliance earlier.

GA ended with the EYP tradition of awards and gifts at the closing ceremony as well as everyone linking up and singing "Imagine" together, a touching moment as the delegates are all now a part of this huge international family. The Ukrainian conference was one of the best and most glorious experiences I have ever had. I felt I was doing exactly what I was made for: politics and public speaking. Attending and taking part in something like this will be of immeasurable benefit to me and all those who attended. As I am now an alumnus, I have free reign to help out with the Irish section as well as the forthcoming international sessions in Poland, then Dublin, Romania (apparently at a ski resort!) and all the other incredible places across Europe. A truly great experience, with truly wonderful people and friendships started that I am sure will continue well into the unforeseeable future and beyond.

Go Wild in the City

Under the theme of 'Go Wild in the City!', Galway City's first ever celebration of its rich biodiversity took place this Autumn.

The timing could not have been more appropriate as the publication soon after of the British government's economic report on the environment- the 'Stern Report'- clearly shows the catastrophe the world faces unless urgent measures are undertaken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It warns of the climatic effects of the destruction of wildlife habitats and the possibility that over 40% of species could become extinct this century.

Galway can do its part to take on board the warnings expressed by Richard Stern and most reputable scientists. Protecting Biodiversity in our city will help save humanity itself!

Planting trees and creating urban forests will not only create habitats for wildlife but also lower greenhouse gases. Thanks to funding from Galway City Council; Galway City Development Board; Galway City Community Forum; Galway Education Centre and the support of dozens of unpaid volunteers from a plethora of organisations (college departments, Marine Institute, BirdWatch Galway, 'Crann', National Aquarium etc), we were able to provide a variety of opportunities for local people to appreciate for the first time, the wonderful variety of plants and animals that exists inside our municipal boundaries.

A Cornucopia of Wildlife Habitats

Galway probably has the greatest number of wildlife habitats of any city in Ireland. We have forests, wetlands, turloughs, meadows, lakes, rivers, limestone landscapes, beaches and rockpools to name but a few. Each of these has their own unique set of species. The Week's series of lectures, plantings and nature



walks allowed young and old to enjoy the wonders of the locality's magnificent flora and fauna. Furthermore we helped people to actually increase biodiversity in the city through planting bulbs and creating home gardens thereby improving their own lives in the process.

Some of the most important public events included a talk on the 58 most significant natural habitats in the city; a major conference at the Environmental Change Institute, Galway University on how best to integrate the planning of green zones into urban development and a public lecture on how to create a wildlife-friendly garden .

Planners & Developers Fail to Turn Up!

The school events were totally booked out with 15 schools. Great! The same uptake alas could not be said about the non-school public events- much work needs to be done to ensure a higher attendance of the general public for next year's Festival. But at least the start has been made. However, we were particularly disappointed with the failure of politicians, developers, engineers, and

planners to attend the university Conference on 'Building a Diverse Galway'. After all, the event was organised primarily for their benefit!

...But City Hall Agree on a Wildlife Action Committee..

On the positive side, a Galway City Council-CDB Natural Environment & Waterways Action committee met for the first time recently to create the framework for implementing the recommendations of the Galway City Inventory of Wildlife Habitats as adopted by City Council last May.

It will meet for a limited period in order to draft a specific set of proposals to be completed & presented to City Council by February/March 2007. The proposals will include putting in place a management programme for the listed local biodiversity areas and the development of an 'ecological corridor' (or what the Americans call a 'Green Highways'!). It will also lay down the terms & methods for the annual review or monitoring of the 58 habitats as listed in the Inventory Report.

September Quarterly Meeting of the Community Forum

At the September Quarterly meeting of the Community Forum, members wished to expressed their desire to thank Ms. Claire Ann Ní Fhlaithearta for her hard work in her role as co-ordinator and wish her the best in her new job. At the meeting, presentations were also made by Nollaig McGuinness of Galway City Partnership about the Strategic Plan 2006-2008 and Donnacha Foley on Active Citizenship and the related seminar,

which took place in the Galway Radisson Hotel.

The Community Forum would also like to welcome its new members; The Western Region Drugs Task Force; Bóthar Stiofáin Combined Residents Association; Eastside Community Education Group; Adventures in Music and For Us Now Women's Group.

Bothar Stiofáin

Bothar Stiofáin Combined Residents, or Bostcor for short, is an umbrella group set up in November of 2005 to represent the interests of residents and foster the development of a proactive social network within the local community. Bothar Stiofáin is a residential road running between the Ragoon Road and the Western Distributor Road just beside Monkey Business. In addition to a number of houses situated directly on Bothar Stiofáin there are five housing estates - Linn Bhui, Riasc na Ri, Cloch Ard, Caiseal Ur and Sliabh Ard - totalling 300 homes. The area has a generous and well integrated mix of couples, retired residents and families with young children, Nationals and Non-Nationals, and renters and owner occupiers. Close to town and yet not too far from the Prom, Silver Strand or Barna Woods makes Bothar Stiofáin an excellent place to live.

Bothar Stiofáin

Bostcor meets on the first Thursday of each month at 9pm in the Clybaun Hotel, which provides facilities to the Association free of charge as part of its involvement in the wider local community. The main purpose of these meetings and the Association is to generate a sense of neighbourhood in the area and provide a forum in which people can catch up with their neighbours and have a chat about what's happening in the area. However, Bostcor also provides the machinery to highlight issues of concern and facilitate the interests of people living in the neighbourhood by lobbying local and national politicians and generating public awareness in the media. The monthly meetings have been central to a number of issues that Bostcor has tackled during the last 12 months including crime and local policing. In dealing with this the Association met both the Garda Commissioner Noel Conroy and the Minister for Justice Michael McDowell.

Presently the two main matters of concern in the Bothar Stiofáin area are the ongoing development of the Knocknacarra District Centre and Road Safety on Bothar Stiofáin. The residents have already held meetings with the Centre architects and Dunnes Stores and hope to pursue the good relationships established for the benefit of the wider community. They will also be lobbying hard for traffic calming measures to be introduced on Bothar Stiofáin given the large volumes and high speed of traffic along what is a residential road.

Bostcor has also initiated a broader social programme as part of its drive to generate community spirit. In 2006 the Association held a highly successful summer barbeque and raffle, and just before Christmas they will be holding a Mulled Wine Reception. Looking forward to next year it is hoped to expand the range of events to also include a biannual Community Clean-Up and children's sports day.

2006 Bostcor Summer Barbeque

To help keep residents in touch with local developments, Bothar Stiofáin Combined Residents drop and e-mail regular newsletters to residents plus run both a website and blog. The addresses are <http://www.botharstiofain.net> and <http://bostcor.blogspot.com>. To obtain further information Bostcor can be contacted at bostcor@gmail.com or info@botharstiofain.net.



ISLAMIC CELEBRATIONS IN GALWAY

By Brian MacNamara



month passed. Imam Khalid describes Ramadan as a family-orientated time that is marked particularly by Muslim worshippers' devoted reverence to God and charitable deeds to their fellow mankind. Each sunset throughout the month groups of believers assembled at the official mosque in Riverside to partake in celebratory break-fast feasts. Those meals were prepared by volunteers who had previously submitted their names to a list displayed on a wall of the mosque for the honour of doing so.

As is traditional amongst followers of Islam, several of the congregation present at that official event exchanged gifts. Imam Khalid reveals it to be also customary for followers of his faith to pay courtesy visits to friends and family on the day of Eid. He also reveals that, since the Islamic holiday fell on an ordinary working day in Ireland, many of the Islamic community would not have been able to attend the main celebration. Due to this he reveals there was a further day of festivities organized for the following Saturday. That extra event took place within the confines of Shantalla Community Centre, in the form of a three-hour family party that comprised of games, music and feasting. A bouncing castle was even hired to entertain the many children present, and gifts were also then exchanged amongst friends within the community.

Sheik Khalid, who is now in his fifth year as Imam to Galway, believes this year's celebration to have been the biggest in the area yet for Eid Mubarak. In addition, he considers the broader Galway community to be growing increasingly aware of the importance of Ramadan to their new Islamic neighbours. Some Irish natives were to be seen amongst both the official Eid gathering, and the celebrations of the following Saturday. While considering the majority of those who have probably been personally invited by their Muslim friends, the Imam nonetheless declares that such festivities are open to any who may wish to join in. He concludes by wishing the local Christian communities in the area a happy and peaceful Christmas and joyful New Year.

On Tuesday, October 24th, up to seven hundred Galway-based Muslims assembled for a special morning of prayer at the Westside Community Centre to celebrate Eid, the day in the Islamic calendar that marks the end of Ramadan's holy month of fasting. The significance of Eid to followers of Islam is comparable only to that of Christmas amongst Christians. Determined by movements of the moon, the date of this year's celebration was only officially declared as late as the preceding Sunday evening. Celebrants of the event in Westside hailed from a wide variety of countries scattered throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, thus reflecting the current wide-ranging diversity amongst the expanding community in the locality.

Although a dwelling house in Riverside has been used as an official mosque for several years now its size can no longer cater for the large numbers that regularly attend the weekly Friday prayer services, much less such a high-profile occasion as Eid. Due to this the Westside venue is currently being used on a weekly basis by the Muslim community until such time as its leaders secure a suitable site upon which to build a mosque capable of fulfilling current-day needs.

During the four weeks leading up to Eid, Muslims are required by their beliefs to fast and refrain from drinking liquids each day from sunrise to sunset. Despite those sacrifices, Sheik Khalid Sallabi, who is Imam (spiritual leader) to the Galway-based Islamic community, notes that several of his congregation have been remarking on how quickly the

Partner Negotiations - an insider's view

By: Ivan Cooper, Director of Advocacy, The Wheel

United in Diversity: The CV Pillar in Social Partnership

Politics is often defined as “the art of the possible” and social partnership is, in its own unique way, a type of political process. Social Partnership isn't perfect: any system that tries to balance the competing claims of representative and participative democracy is inevitably messy. But participation in national social partnership by organisations drawn from the community and voluntary sector came of age in 2006, with the publication of the new national agreement Towards 2016.

The agreement recognises for the first time that the economic and social dimensions of policy are equally important to creating a just and fair society. Until this agreement, the Government had always put the economy first, arguing that social needs would only be met through economic progress “lifting all boats”. This crucial recognition that the social is as important as the economic, underpins many of the commitments contained in the agreement - and is a direct result of the hard work of the fifteen organisations in the Community and Voluntary Pillar (CV Pillar) and the cohesion they maintained during the negotiations.

This isn't the place to sketch the many commitments in the agreement that are relevant to improving the lives of all our people - there are plenty of places where readers can get that. Instead, I'd like to focus here on an important feature of the coming-of-age process I mentioned above: the cohesion that characterised the CV Pillar during the negotiations.

Social partnership is about achieving a compromise that is acceptable to all concerned: it's the art of the possible. It's about gauging what is achievable and identifying what may need to be fought for some other day. But it's also about maintaining important principles, principles that may be different for each

organisation involved. To participate in negotiating a new national agreement, the CV Pillar had to identify a set of shared priorities. Like preparing for any negotiation, it was important to present a united front and to avoid a situation where there were contradictory proposals contained in our portfolio of objectives.

For organisations as diverse as those in the CV Pillar, this process was intrinsically difficult. Maintaining cohesion could have been a challenge. As a new participant in the Pillar, I was very impressed with the way the members rose to the challenge, never focussing on differences at the expense of the prize to be won by focussing on our shared objectives. Shared interests won out over individual interests and everyone gained.

Once underway, part of the negotiations involved a drafting process where Government invited the four pillars of social partnership - the employers, the trades unions, the farmers and the CV Pillar - to make submissions on their priorities and to respond to drafts as the agreement took shape. This challenged the CV Pillar to make detailed inputs at the plenary meetings of all the social partners and to respond quickly to the resulting drafts of proposals that emerged from Government during the process.

For well-resourced organisations with specialist staff such as IBEC, ICTU and the IFA, this demand on their time and energy was bearable (though I'm sure they would vigorously argue the point!). But for community and voluntary organisations - often relying on volunteers during the negotiations - this requirement to react cohesively and speedily placed major demands on the organisations involved.

Detailed papers might arrive on a Monday with a deadline to submit an agreed Pillar response by Wednesday lunchtime - an outline response had to be drafted, circulated to the Pillar members, feedback incorporated into a coherent

document, and approval secured from everyone. Add to this that the process continued for five months and that each organisation had to internally approve each position and you get a sense of the demands made - especially on volunteers. In total the five-month marathon negotiation process began in February this year and involved over twelve planning meetings of the CV Pillar, ten meetings of all the social partners in plenary session, four bi-lateral meetings between the CV Pillar and Government, over ten “breakout” meetings between the CV Pillar and relevant government departments, and many formal and informal meetings with Government officials.

As someone new to the process, I was impressed to see the CV Pillar rise to the challenge and demonstrate an equal - if not superior - professional attitude to crafting the national agreement as any of our partner Pillars in the process.

It's easy to criticise the national partnership process for its lack of representative legitimacy, or to assert that participation has questioned the independence of the CV organisations involved. But remember - it's the art of the possible. The negative features that are associated with an opportunity to influence Government policy have to be assessed against the positive outcomes for society at large.

I, for one, feel that implementation of the agreement will move Ireland closer to being a society characterised by fairness and well-being where every person's social, economic and cultural rights are respected. I feel that this achievement more than outweighs the imperfections of the process. And I feel that the cohesion demonstrated by the organisations in the CV Pillar will serve it well in ensuring that the agreement is implemented in full and for the benefit of all our people. The imperfect process can be improved over time - if we all work cohesively.

Social partnership is about achieving a compromise that is acceptable to all concerned: it's the art of the possible.