



Contents

A Few Words from the County Manager	02
Joint Address from Cathaoirigh/Mayor	03
Electoral Areas	04
Louth County Council Members 2005	05
Staff	07
Dundalk Town Council Members 2005	08
Drogheda Borough Council Members 2005	09
Ardee Town Council Members 2005	10
Goal 1 – Customer Service	11
Goal 2 – Facilitating Economic Development	15
Goal 3 – Improving the Quality of Life	23
Goal 4 – Harnessing Community Participation	33
Goal 5 – Forming Alliances with other Organisations	41
Service Indicators	45
Local Indicators	48
Financial Figures	50

◦ A few words from the County Manager



Martina Moloney, County Manager.

I am delighted to welcome the publication of this Annual Report for 2006. The report for 2006 highlights the achievements of Louth Local Authorities in implementing the goals adopted by Louth Local Authorities in the Corporate Plan (2004-2009). The Corporate Plan provides the basis for the Councils' activities, and has prioritised the areas of customer service, facilitation of economic development, improving quality of life, harnessing community participation and working in partnership with the other stakeholders to meet the needs of the County.

The year 2006 has been extremely challenging for Louth. Positive progress can be reported in advancing the development of Dundalk as a Gateway. The Dundalk South West Local Area Plan was adopted which will provide the framework for the major population growth envisaged for that area. A Public Private Partnership proposal is being advanced for the redevelopment of the Market Square and infrastructural enhancements are being advanced on linkages with the hub towns of Cavan and Monaghan, together with preparatory work on the Western infrastructure. In addition the Dundalk Economic Development Group, under the Chairmanship of Mr. Peter Malone is advancing the actions envisaged in the Indecon Report for the Gateway.

The strategy for the advancement of the Drogheda Development Centre is substantially completed which sets ambitious targets for the future of the Borough and its environs. The adoption of the Northern Environs Local Area Plan has been followed by significant pre-planning discussions including the preparation of a draft infrastructure agreement to facilitate the servicing of the area. The Borough Council has advanced a number of substantial projects such as the Drogheda Leisure Centre, Highlanes Art Gallery and the commencement of Environmental Improvement works in the Town Centre.

The County has achieved success in the Tidy Towns Competition and IBAL. Advances have been made in the provision of Broadband and the delivery of an ambitious housing programme. Investment in tourism in the County has also shown an increase in tourism numbers and revenue. The Social Inclusion agenda has been progressed through the work of the social inclusion unit, the RAPID programme and the commitment of staff across Louth Local Authorities. Also, a number of cross-border projects in which Louth has engaged have delivered dividends for the county.

This is just a snapshot of some of the important work carried out on behalf of the people of Louth and a more detailed analysis is set out in the report itself. In advancing the Council's Work Programme the input of various Elected Councils have provided excellent guidance and support. I sincerely thank them for their advice and leadership. Finally, I want to thank the management and staff of Louth Local Authorities for their hard work and dedication during the year. Without their support it would not be possible to achieve such substantial progress against a general backdrop of rapid change and growing demands.

I believe that the County is well placed to avail of opportunities which will become available in the forthcoming National Development Plan (2007-2013).

Martina Moloney

Martina Moloney
County Manager

Joint Address by the Cathaoirleach/Mayor :



Jim Lennon.



Noel Lennon.



Michael O'Dowd.



Jim Tenanty.

During 2006 Louth Local Authorities continued to advance the objectives laid out in our 2004 – 2009 Corporate Plan. In this context significant progress was made during 2006 in the areas such as the provision of infrastructure both social and physical, customer service and environmental improvements.

Work on a number of major infrastructural projects continued in 2006 in particular the construction of the Newry – Dundalk link road and the upgrading and extension to Port Oriel, Clogherhead, both of which should be completed in 2007.

A number of social infrastructural projects were completed and opened in 2006 including a new Skatepark in Dundalk, Drogheda

swimming pool and a wonderful new Art Gallery in Drogheda – Highlanes Gallery.

A very successful Chairmans Charity Ball was held in June which raised in excess of €85,000 for Malawi, and we hope that this will be the first of many fundraising events for this worthwhile cause.

Other developments and outputs are detailed through the report which would not have been possible without the continued support and dedication of members and staff to which we extend our utmost appreciation.

Jim Lennon
Cathaoirleach
Louth County Council

Noel Lennon
Cathaoirleach
Dundalk Town Council

Michael O'Dowd
Cathaoirleach
Drogheda Borough Council

Jim Tenanty
Cathaoirleach
Ardee Town Council

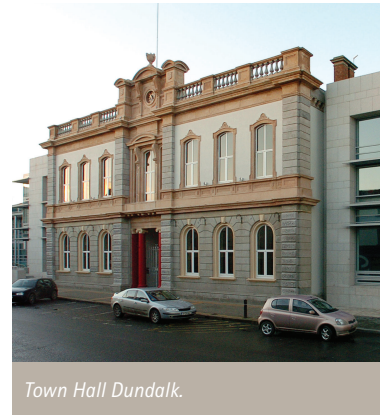
Electoral Areas



Drogheda Borough Council, Drogheda



County Hall, Millennium Centre, Dundalk.



Town Hall Dundalk.

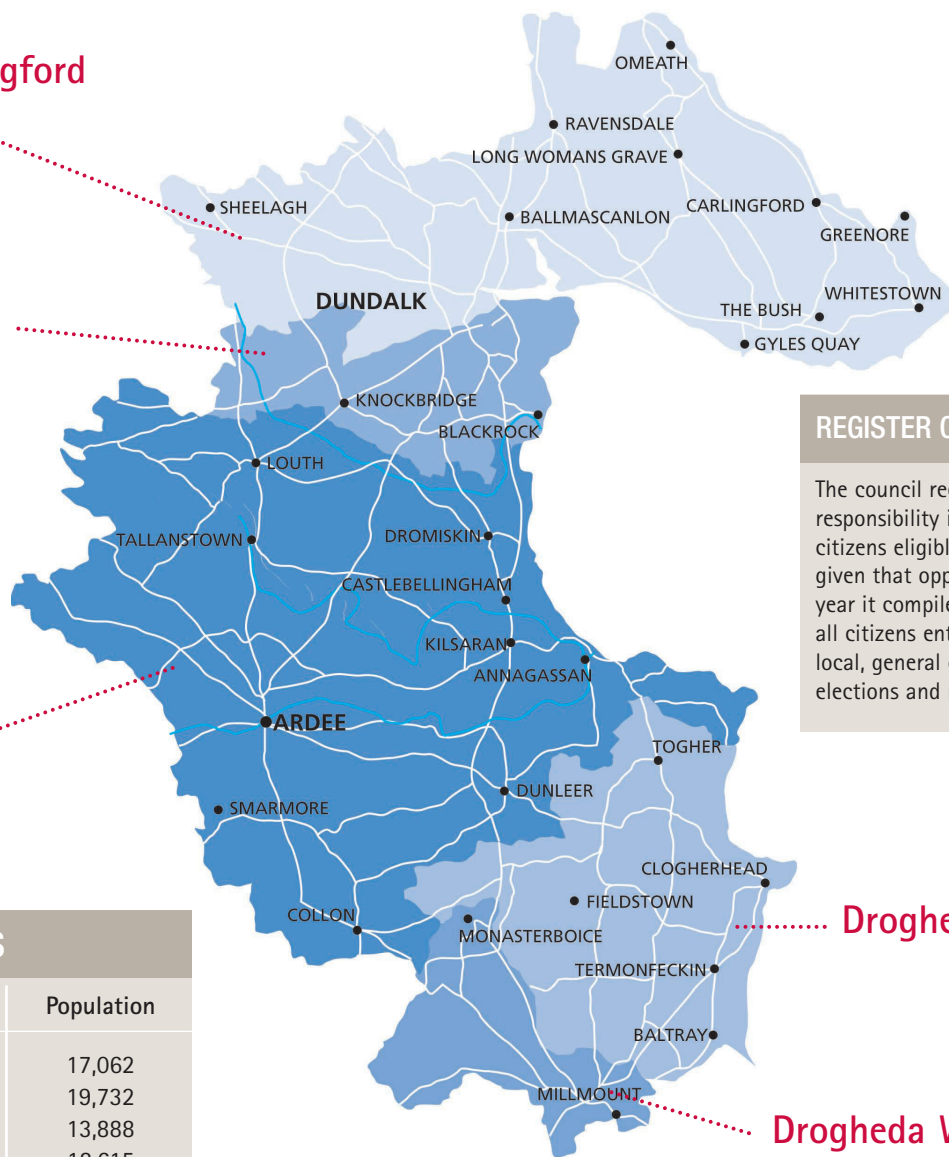
Dundalk Carlingford

Dundalk South

Ardee

REGISTER OF ELECTORS

The council recognises its responsibility in ensuring that citizens eligible to vote are given that opportunity. Each year it compiles a register of all citizens entitled to vote at local, general or presidential elections and referenda.



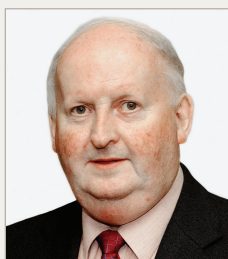
ELECTORAL AREAS	
Area	Population
Ardee	17,062
Drogheda East	19,732
Drogheda West	13,888
Dundalk Carlingford	18,615
Dundalk South	18,792

Louth County Council Members 2006 :

Dundalk/Carlingford



Fine Gael
Terry Brennan



Fianna Fáil
Seamus Keelan



Sinn Féin
Jim Loughran



Non Party
Jim Ryan



Fianna Fáil
Peter Savage



Sinn Féin
Tomás Sharkey

Dundalk South



Non Party
Martin Bellew



Fianna Fáil
Declan Breathnach



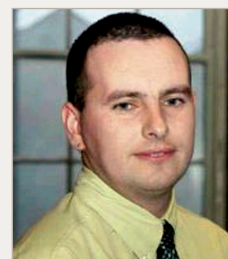
Fine Gael
Jim D'Arcy



Non Party
Mary Grehan



Fianna Fáil
Donal Lynch



Sinn Féin
Kevin Meenan

Louth County Council Members 2006

Ardee



Fine Gael
Finnan McCoy



Fianna Fáil
Thomas Clare



Fine Gael
Jim Lennon



Sinn Féin
Pearse McGeough



Fianna Fáil
Tommy Reilly

Drogheda East



Fianna Fáil
Jacqui McConville



Fianna Fáil
Jimmy Mulroy



Sinn Féin
Imelda Munster



Fine Gael
Michael O'Dowd



Fine Gael
Oliver Tully

Drogheda West



Fine Gael
Anthony Donohoe



Fianna Fáil
Frank Maher



Labour
Gerald Nash



Non Party
Ken O'Heiligh

STAFF LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL

Martina Moloney – County Manager

M. Curran – Director of Service

J. Martin – Director of Service

J. McGuinness – Director of Service

R. Kenny – Director of Service

A. Davis – Head of Finance

Senior Executive Officers

C. Moss – (Corporate Services)

M. Murtagh – (Environment)

P. Fitzsimons – (Housing & Emergency Services)

P. Donnelly – (Roads & Marine)

W. Walsh – (Planning and Development)

E. Mulholland – (Information Technology)

B. Lynch – (Financial Accountant)

R. McAuley – (Financial Accountant)

A. Ward – (County Librarian)

Senior Engineers

R. McKenna – (Housing)

P. Fallon – (Roads & Marine)

D. O'Neill – (Environmental Services)

M. O'Callaghan – (Sanitary Services)

Senior planner

G. Duffy – (Planning)

Dundalk Town Council

Dundalk Town Council Members



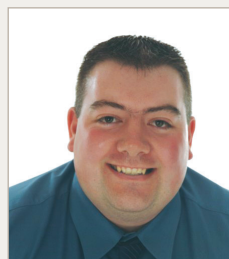
Non Party
Martin Bellew



Fianna Fáil
Seamus Keelan



Green Party
Mark Dearey



Sinn Féin
Ian Dooley



Non Party
Mary Grehan



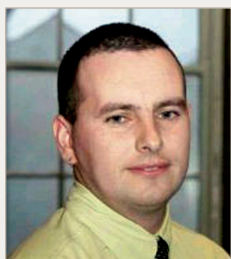
Fianna Fáil
Seamus Byrne



Sinn Féin
Geraldine Murphy



Fianna Fáil
Noel Lennon



Sinn Féin
Kevin Meenan



Fine Gael
Jim D'Arcy



Fine Gael
Eamonn O'Boyle



Non Party
Jim Ryan

STAFF DUNDALK COUNTY COUNCIL

M. Moloney County Manager

F. Pentony Town Clerk

C. Duff Town Engineer

Drogheda Borough Council Members



Fianna Fáil
Tommy Murphy



Fine Gael
Michael O'Dowd



Sinn Féin
Dom Wilton



Labour
Gerald Nash



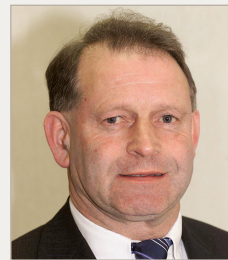
Non Party
Malachy Godfrey



Fianna Fáil
Jimmy Mulroy



Fine Gael
Anthony Donohoe



Non Party
Tommy Byrne



Labour
Paul Bell



Sinn Féin
Mathew Coogan



Fianna Fáil
Frank Maher



Non Party
Ken O'Heiligh

STAFF DROGHEDA BOROUGH COUNCIL

M. Moloney County Manager

D. Foley Town Clerk

D. Agnew Borough Engineer

Ardee Town Council

Ardee Town Council Members



Fine Gael
Niall Carberry



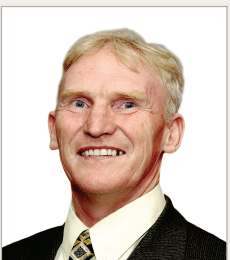
Sinn Féin
Seamus Gaffney



Progressive Democrats
Leonard Hatrick



Fianna Fáil
Pdraig McKenny



Fianna Fáil
Fintan Malone



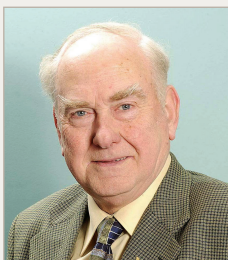
Non Party
Jim Tenanty



Fine Gael
Finnan McCoy



Fine Gael
Fionnán McCoy



Labour
Tom Minogue

STAFF ARDEE TOWN COUNCIL

M. Moloney County Manager

F. Reilly Town Clerk

GOAL 1

To Deliver the Best Possible Service to Our Customers and Clients

The delivery of a high quality service is a theme that cuts across all Louth Local Authorities' activities and we strive to meet the diverse and changing needs of our customers.

Customer Charter

Following the adoption of a Customer Charter and Action Plan for Louth Local Authorities the implementation of a plan was rolled out to all sections in 2006. The charter and action plan sets out our core principles with regard to our customer service and how we propose to implement these principles and ensure that our customers are dealt with in an efficient and effective manner at all times.



Quality Customer Service.

Monitoring the needs of our Customers

Customer complaints/comment system

During the course of 2006 the process commenced with the development of an enhanced customer complaints system.

Complaint/comment forms are available on every public desk and all complaints/comments are dealt with as speedily as possible.

During the course of 2006:

- 11 Customer Complaints were made through our formal system.
- 7 matters were raised with the Ombudsman.
- 13 applications were made under the Freedom of Information Act 1997.

Access to Services

Lo-Call number – 1890 202 303

The Lo-call number for Louth Local Authorities which was introduced in 2005 was extended in 2006 to a 24 hour, 7 day week service which assists occasions where emergency out of hours deployments of staff and services are required.

Online Services

Customer Care has been augmented by the expansion of our online services through the use of our website. In 2006 services such as below were developed:

Goal 1

- iPlan planning system
- Electoral Registration process
- Online payments for certain services
- Development of our Pound online services

The commencement of 2007 will see the financial management systems that support the three Louth Local Authorities being consolidated into one system. This will enable us to expand further online services such as parking fines and other services which will assist the customer in every case.

Social Inclusion

- The pilot Social Inclusion Unit was rolled out permanently in Louth Local Authorities in March 2006 comprising of a Social Inclusion Officer and Social Inclusion Analyst.
- The Social Inclusion Unit assisted the Arts Office in the development of the first fully accessible website within LLA – www.createlouth.ie
- To further address customer needs, translation of some Housing documents into French/Russian and Romanian were produced. Motor Taxation supplied in other languages were translated into English.
- The Barcelona Team met 3 times and focussed on the expenditure of the Disability Strategy Funding of 500,000 allocated to LLA in 2006. Other areas of work commenced in 2006 included the Disability Implementation Plan (due Mid-2007), and working with local Disability groups on access issues within LLA.

Disability training was provided to staff and access audits were carried out in:

- Civic Amenity Centres
- Recreation Centres
- Swimming Pool
- Halting Sites
- Graveyards
- Beaches
- Playgrounds
- Public Toilets
- Community Houses
- Parks

Capital works carried out include:

Installation of chairlift, audio loop systems, upgrade to road crossings and provision of audio signalled crossings, dropping of kerbs, installation of ramps and handrails and adjustment of counters in public buildings.

- An intercultural event was organised for staff by the Social Inclusion Unit and Workplace Partnership to promote Anti-racism and Intercultural week 2006.
- The Tenant Participation in Estate Management Policy was adopted by Dundalk Town Council and Louth County Council in 2006.
- A review of the Higher Education Grant Bursary Award took place in 2006 with changes implemented from 2007 onwards.
- Research and statistical data produced and circulated



Employees receiving their certificates in Sign Language (Level 2).

- Funding was secured by the Social Inclusion Unit from the department of the Taoiseach's eInclusion Fund and a eLearning project for Older persons was rolled out in Yellowbatter, Drogheda
- Cross border links with Newry & Mourne District council were further strengthened with the successful joint application for Peace Funding (SEUPB) to implement a cross-border project (to June 2008) focussing on the needs of Ethnic Minorities
- The Social Inclusion Unit is led the development of a multi-agency anti-racism and diversity (ARD) plan for Louth following funding received from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. This is due for completion in mid-2007.

Accessibility for visually impaired persons

The traffic signals at Quay Street and N52 junction and Barrack St and the N52 junction were upgraded to facilitate the needs of the visually impaired. This involved the installation of tactile paving, tactile push buttons, and audio signals at the crossings.

Animal Compound – Public Service Excellence Award

The new Animal Compound for Louth County Council won a brace of major awards in its first year of operation. It was one of twenty projects selected for the Taoiseach's Excellence in Public Service Awards, a biennial competition for innovative projects drawn from across the public service. It received a further accolade by being one of the three projects selected to represent the Irish public service at the European forum, the Quality Conference in Finland, the second ever local authority to compete at this stage. The pound was also an award winner at the UDITE conference in Malta, the Union of Local Authority Chief Executives of Europe, in their inaugural Performance Improvement Awards.

The awards were made more significant by the fact that the project was fully designed 'in-house' by Louth County Council's architect and engineering staff, and was built by a local building firm, again working in tandem with the council's engineering and housing staff. To date the pound has been visited by numerous other local authorities as well as officials from the Department of Environment, and is considered the benchmark for local authority animal compounds.



The Co. Manager receives the Taoiseach's Excellence in Public Service Award for the Animal Compound.

Provision of Facilities

New Joint Offices with OPW and Courts Service in Ardee

Considerable progress has been made on this project during 2006 and the contract for construction of the offices was awarded and work commenced before the end of the year. These new offices will give Ardee a fine new Civic Building. It will improve facilities for those who do business with both the Town and County Council and the new Court House will offer the most modern facilities. Construction of these offices will continue during 2007.

Plans for a new Area Offices in Dunleer were well advanced in 2006 by Corporate Services.

Training and Development of staff

Staff Training & Development

Staff Training and Development is recognised by Louth Local Authority as a significant and important element in achieving and securing the corporate goals of the Local Authority.

A number of key training activities were delivered to staff in 2006 to staff to enable them to deliver a high quality service to customers and clients alike.

Training Activity	No. of Staff Trained
Customer Charter Training	369
Customer Care Training	121
Disability Equality & Diversity Training	74

Louth Local Authorities recognise that Health & Safety Training has a vital role to play in raising awareness of workplace Health & Safety and reducing accidents in the workplace. In 2006 Louth Local Authority Staff attended over 646 individual Health & Safety training activities. Some of the most popular Health & Safety courses included:



Chairman Cllr. P. Savage and Director of Service J. McGuinness with Taoiseach B. Ahern at the Excellence in Public Service Awards ceremony.

Goal 1



Assertiveness training in County Hall.



Training on the Performance Management & Development System.

H&S Training Activity	No. of Staff Trained
Manual Handling	196
Safe Pass	246
First Aid	23

2006 saw the implementation of phase 2 of the Cross Border Management Training Programme. A total of 6 Louth Local Authority staff are participating in this Interreg sponsored management training programme. The programme affords local authority staff from authorities on both sides of the border the opportunity to share knowledge, experience and best practise.

Louth Local Authority wish to promote the concept of Life Long Learning amongst all staff. To this end a significant number of staff have availed of the Training Assistance Scheme and have completed the Certificate in Local Government Studies, Diploma in Local Government Studies and numerous other certificate , diploma and degree courses.

Several staff have also successfully completed the MBA Masters in Business Administration.

7 outdoor staff are currently engaged in the mature apprenticeship scheme. To date they have successfully completed a number of phases on the apprenticeship scheme and are currently on work experience with contractor's within the county.

Louth Local Authority Staff also attended over 100 individual seminars and conferences through out 2006. This forum allows staff to network with colleagues in similar areas of work and to share and exchange information on new developments and recent legislation.

During 2006 a total of €360,000 was allocated to staff training and development. In Louth Local Authorities this accounted for 5.6% of the total productive payroll budget which exceeded the recommended national average of 3%.

Performance Management and Development System

Over the last decade, the Strategic Management Initiative and public service modernisation programme have provided the framework to achieve national development objectives while making effective use of resources. In doing so, Louth Local Authorities has tried to make use of effective human resource management systems to ensure that each person who works in the service can develop to his or her maximum potential in contributing to the attainment of corporate goals.

The Performance Management and Development System was introduced to Louth Local Authorities in June 2005 as a result of a protracted journey through various Partnership Agreements. The successful roll out of the PMDS realises strategic objective 4.2 "To implement PMDS that will integrate improved service provision, organisation objectives and human resource planning". The roll out programme was completed on Dec 31st. A full evaluation of the roll out process was carried out and a report prepared for Senior Management.

An organisation depends on project excellence. Louth local authorities, through utilisation of PMDS, has put in place a system capable of delivering excellent projects, and in doing so will be viewed as a premier employer of motivated and committed staff.

GOAL 2

To Facilitate Economic Development and Maximize our Strategic Border Location mid point between Dublin and Belfast

Louth Local Authorities recognise the significance of Louth's unique location and we endeavour to ensure that Louth's strengths as a location for investment in social, economic environmental and cultural terms are harnessed and managed effectively through appropriate planning, quality infrastructure and the promotion of Louth as a quality Tourism destination.

Dundalk Gate Way

FORWARD PLANNING

Launch of Dundalk Economic Development Plan

The Dundalk Economic Development Plan "Well Connected for Investment" was launched in March and a new public private partnership group the Dundalk Economic Development Group was set up under the chairmanship of Peter Malone. The Development Group has four Working Groups that focus on marketing, jobs creation, research, access to education, town centre improvement amongst other issues. The Working Groups meet regularly and the Dundalk Economic Development Group meets monthly to review progress and update plans.

The following has been achieved in 2006:

- Planning a branding and marketing campaign
- Planning a new one-stop shop Website to market the town at national and international levels
- A promotional DVD "Destination Dundalk" has been completed and

will be a useful resource to attract business and conference tourism by Louth Hospitality

- A golf brochure has been produced
- The development of targeted training programmes for local residents in the retail and hospitality sectors
- Development of a local labour clause
- Expansion of the School Completion Programme
- Consultations for the regeneration scheme for Cox's Demesne and Muirhevnamor
- A database of available land banks, office and incubation space has been completed
- The Finnabair Business Park has undergone a €5 million refurbishment programme by the IDA.



Marshes Shopping Centre, Dundalk.

Goal 2

- The Regional Development Centre at DKIT has expanded its incubation facilities funded by Enterprise Ireland
- FÁS, through the One-Step-Up initiative in conjunction with DKIT and other approved Training Providers are providing greater access for people employed in Dundalk to upskill and renew their existing skill levels
- A co-ordinated entrepreneurship programme for Dundalk has been developed which will focus on sustainable, renewable and future technologies.
- A commuter skills survey was carried out
- A number of improvements to the infrastructure and image of the town are underway e.g. redevelopment of the town centre at the Market Square

Dundalk Market Square Refurbishment

The Council invited 'Expressions of Interest for the Redevelopment/Rejuvenation of the Market Square & the Mixed Use Development on the Market Square, Dundalk' on 29th June 2006 with a closing date of 25th August 2006. The Pre-Qualification Questionnaire requested

- The construction of a new landmark mixed use building to incorporate -An Arts office and a civic use/information office use for Dundalk Town Council;
- Any other commercial uses, e.g. retail, offices, leisure, residential;
- The redevelopment/rejuvenation of the existing and/or expanded Market Square as the town's premier urban space.
- Underground car parking (if appropriate and/or practical)

This project is using a PPP approach and is currently at the Competitive Dialogue stage in this competition.

Dundalk South West Local Area Plan

Work on the preparation of this plan was ongoing during 2005 and the completed draft of the plan has been approved by Dundalk Town Council and Louth County Council during 2006. The Plan will facilitate the development of Dundalk as a gateway under the National Spatial Strategy, which provides for a population of 60,000 within 20 years, and is in line with the target set down in the Regional Planning Guidelines

Urban Design Framework for the Mullagharlin Area of Dundalk

The Preparation of an Urban Design Framework for the Mullagharlin area of Dundalk was commenced in 2006 by Colin Buchanan Planning Consultants. It is intended to give the Design Framework legal effect by bringing it to the Dundalk Town Council and the Louth County Council for adoption as a variation to the Dundalk and Environs Development Plan during 2007.

Developing the Infrastructure for Dundalk Gateway

Work on this key objective has continued during 2006 on a number of fronts.

South and East

On foot of a large planning permission granted in Haggardstown, discussions are close to conclusion with a developer in relation to provision of a number of key roads and water services infrastructure



Aerial view of construction of the Newry-Dundalk Link Road.

elements, including a major waste water pumping station which will serve the greater area beyond his site.

Work on the IDA Strategic Site at Mullagharlin got underway with the construction contract commenced. This project, in addition to putting in place a major strategic industrial site with reserved water services capacity, will deliver another part of the Western Infrastructure.

North and East

Following a decision by an Bord Pleanála not to grant a Motorway Order for an interchange on the Armagh Road confirmed by An Bord Pleanála, discussions with interested developers advanced to ensure the construction of the Dundalk Western Infrastructure Road between the Armagh Road and the Newry Road. A framework of consulting engineers to advance design and documentation aspects of this road was also finalised. The framework allows us to extend the contract of these consultants to undertake design etc. works on other aspects of roads and water services infrastructure for Dundalk Gateway

South West

The preliminary design was completed for the Dundalk Western Infrastructure Road in this area. Dundalk Town Council and Louth County Council have entered discussions with a number of developers in regard to the provision of the infrastructure. A study for the surface water requirements was commissioned.



Major earthworks underway at Thistle Cross on the A1/N1 Newry Dundalk Link Road.

Mount Avenue

The first phase of the new relief road for Mount Avenue was completed by way of agreement with a developer. A consultant was appointed to carry out the preliminary design for phase two. Consultants were appointed to carry out the master-planning of Mount Avenue during 2006.

Town Centre Transportation Study

This document was finalised in 2006 and an agreed program of implementation has commenced. St Helena's/St Mary's Road junction was substantially completed in 2006.

Hill Street Junction

The review of the Hill street junction was completed in 2006. A preliminary design was carried out in preparation for a Part VIII planning procedure which was advertised late 2006.

Hoey's Lane

The Town Council has funded the remaining section of the Hoey's lane to be upgraded to include footpaths, public lighting and cycle tracks. The contractor commenced work in 2005 and this work was completed spring 2006.

Red Barns Road

The compulsory purchase order was confirmed by Bord Pleanála. The contract documents were prepared and the project was tendered in 2006.

Armagh Road

Consultants were appointed to carry out a preliminary design of the Armagh road to accommodate future development.

Links to Gateway

The Compulsory Purchase Order for the Red Bog Section of the Dundalk to Carrickmacross Road has just been published and confirmed after all objections were withdrawn. Subject to funding, work should commence on the construction of this scheme in 2007.

Funding was secured in 2006 for some junction and other improvements to the N53 Dundalk to Castleblayney Road. Substantial additional funding was sought for major improvements to this key road and subject to funding being made available, the appointment consultants in 2007 to commence design and statutory documentation for Phase 1 of these improvements is expected.

Public Lighting Upgrade

Dundalk Town Council rolled out the next phase of the public lighting operation and refurbishment program in the town. A review of the overall public lighting scheme was carried out by the consultant to identify any deficiencies.

Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor

The construction of the Newry-Dundalk Link Road will complete the County Louth section of the Dublin-Belfast Road Corridor.

Work has continued apace during 2006 and very substantial progress has been made. This project will continue throughout 2007 and depending on good weather and no unforeseen delays, the mainline high quality dual-carriageway should be open to traffic towards the end of 2007.

Drogheda as a Primary Development Centre

FORWARD PLANNING

Drogheda Economic Action Plan

The Drogheda Economic Development Group Action Plan was launched in November 2004. The plan builds on the valuable work presented in the Economic and Spatial Development Study of Drogheda and its Environs which was completed by Peter Bacon and Associates in 2001.

In order to advance the implementation of the recommendations in the Bacon Report, the Drogheda Economic Development Group was formed in March 2004 in order to prepare the Economic Development Action Plan. The group which is chaired by the County Manager, consists of representatives of Louth County Council, Drogheda Borough Council, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Drogheda Chamber of Commerce, Drogheda Chamber of Trade, Louth County Enterprise Board, FÁS, and Drogheda Council of Trade Unions.

The key economic challenge which Drogheda faces over the coming years is to cater for the anticipated growth of the town in a sustainable way with the range of employment, accommodation and services, which meets the needs of the local population. The Action Plan has been prepared to ensure that Drogheda fulfills this aim.

Actions Progressed in 2006:

1. Develop a public relations marketing strategy for Drogheda – Ongoing
2. Roads

Goal 2

3. Improve all approach roads to town – Ongoing
4. Pedestrianise Town Centre – Ongoing
5. Upgrade Waste Water Treatment Plant – Complete
6. Upgrade Water Supply – Ongoing
7. Implement a Water Conservation Project in the town – Ongoing
8. Review of occupancy rates in town centre – Ongoing
9. Review the operation of the weekly market – Ongoing
10. Identify Coach parking in town – Complete
11. Develop Millmount's potential – Ongoing
12. Develop Highlanes Gallery – Complete
13. Investigate the development and potential of the river – Ongoing
14. Prepare an Arts Plan for the town, in terms of:
 - a. Infrastructure
 - b. Community Activities – Complete
15. Prepare a Sports and Recreation Strategy for the town – Ongoing
16. Provide a swimming pool and ancillary leisure facilities – Complete
17. Develop and extend Riverside Walkway and other passive recreation facilities – Ongoing
18. Develop Open Space at Moneymore for passive and active recreation – Ongoing
19. Develop a new Litter Management Plan – Ongoing
20. Develop Civic Amenity Site – Complete
21. Improvement of street signs and civic spaces. – Ongoing
22. Encourage the development of "The Back Lanes" under the Development Plan – Ongoing
23. Review implementation of the Derelict Sites Act – Ongoing
24. To facilitate the effective provision of decentralisation in Drogheda – Ongoing
25. Advance the Greater Drogheda area Planning Strategy – Strategy Adopted

Planning strategy for the Greater Drogheda Area

Work on this study, which is a joint venture by Louth County Council, Drogheda Borough Council and Meath County, was ongoing during 2006, and is due to be adopted by the three Local Authorities during the first half of 2007. It provides a strategic framework for the development of Drogheda for the period 2004 to 2024, and will provide for a population by 2024 of approximately 65,000 within Drogheda and its Northern and Southern Environs.



Scotch Hall, Drogheda.

Masterplan for the Northern Environ of Drogheda

A Local Area Plan for the Northern Drogheda Environs was adopted by the County Council in July 2004, to provide for a range of development uses in the Northern Environs of Drogheda, with a population of 20,000 within the next 20 years. The Master Plan for the area covers the residential zoned lands within the Local Area Plan and was adopted as a variation of the Local Area Plan by the County Council at its meeting on 15th May 2006.

The North Drogheda Development Group, comprising developers and landowners in the area, in partnership with the Planning Authority, are currently preparing detailed designs for the development of the area in preparation for the submission of planning applications during 2007.

PROVISION OF INFRASTRUCTURE

Drogheda Northern Environs

Detailed discussions with the developer group re-commenced in September 2006. Consulting engineers employed by the North Drogheda Development Group are working in close co-operation with Council staff to bring forward design and statutory procedure elements of the project. Progress during 2006 includes:

- Site Investigation Work completed
- Discussions with CIE in relation to railway crossing underway
- Work on documentation for statutory processes, including CPO, well underway
- Preliminary Draft Legal Agreement under discussion
- Detailed discussions on costing and financing structure underway

Road Realignment

Upgrade and realignment of R132 on Northern side of the town including traffic calming measures, drainage, public lighting works and all statutory works in order to facilitate traffic flow from the motorway and through the town.

Upgrade and realignment of Donore Road on South side of the town to improve access



Extension to Drogheda Waste Water Treatment Plant.



Drogheda Waste Water Treatment Plant.



Apartment constructed under Urban & Town Renewal Scheme.

Public Lighting

Upgrade of public lighting at Bachelors Lane and Crushrod Avenue as part of general upgrade of public lighting in the town.

Drogheda Waste Water Treatment Plant

The Extension to Drogheda Waste Water Treatment Plant, which will deliver 101,000 PE capacity, was substantially completed by the end of 2006. This project is of strategic importance to the continued development of the Greater Drogheda Area over the coming years.

Drogheda Water Supply

Improvements to Drogheda Water Supply, in particular sourcing of new water supply and upgrading of the existing plant at Staleen will form part of a major Greater Drogheda Area Water Supply project being led by County Meath. Water supply for North Drogheda will also be included. Work has progressed on this project during 2006 with well testing being undertaken in a number of locations, mainly in East Meath. A number of promising wells have been identified and further exploratory work will continue in 2007. It is not expected that this project will yield any very substantial additional water supply until at least 2009.



Shop front improvements under Town Renewal Scheme.

Town and Village Development

Urban & Town Renewal Schemes

The current scheme, under which the integrated Area Plans for Dundalk and Drogheda have been prepared, came into operation in 1999. It was originally intended to run until the end of 2002 but was extended (with eligibility for full tax relief) to July 2006, for those projects for which 15% of the total project cost had been spent by June 2003.

The Town Renewal scheme under which plans for Ardee, Dunleer, Carlingford, and Castlebellingham were prepared was also extended (with eligibility for full tax relief) to July 2006 providing full planning applications were received by the end of 2004. This extension also applies to exempted developments which had incurred a minimum expenditure of 5% of project costs (and had contracts signed) by the end of 2004.

The 2006 Finance Bill allows for the further extension of these schemes, on the basis of a minimum expenditure, set at 15% of the project cost excluding the cost of the purchase of the site, having been made on the project by the end of 2006 and certified by the local Authority, with a sliding scale of tax relief for qualifying expenditure up to July 2008 as follows:

- Full relief will be available up to end-December 2006
- 75% of the normal relief will apply from January to end-December 2007
- 50% of the normal relief will apply in the period January to end-July 2008

Town Renewal Scheme

Thus far 6 eligible developments have applied for certification under the extension of time provision for the town renewal scheme.

Goal 2

Urban Renewal Scheme

Dundalk

Thus far 2 eligible developments have applied for certification under the extension of time provision for the urban renewal scheme for Dundalk.

Drogheda

Thus far 3 eligible developments have applied for certification under the extension of time provision for the urban renewal scheme for Drogheda.

Category 1 Development Centres

Carlingford

Consultants were appointed in November 2006 to prepare a master plan for Carlingford. This plan will go on public display in 2007.

Countywide Infrastructure Improvements

Improving Road Infrastructure

Ardee By-Pass – The Oral Hearing for this scheme took place on the 4th July 2006 at the Fairways Hotel, Dundalk. An Bórd Pleanála confirmed the Compulsory Purchase Order for the scheme on the 15th September. The Confirmation notice was published on 11 October 06, and the scheme has now become operative.

R177 Kilcurry – Work on design and tender documentation was completed during 2006. The contract for the works was awarded and work commenced by year end.

Development Centre Improvements – Part 8 Planning Process was completed for Tullyallen and Rock Road, Blackrock and a further Part 8 for Station Road Castlebellingham was approved by Council by year end.

Water Services

Water Conservation Project

Louth County Council is leading the Water Conservation Project covering the entire county. Priority in 2006 was given to the Drogheda element of the project because it faces the greatest challenges in relation to water supply.

Key achievements during 2006 include:

- Selection of pilot sites for leakage study
- Appointment of contractors in relation to supply and installation of District Metering
- Substantial completion of District Meter installation in all parts of the county.

Universal Metering on Non-Domestic Water Services Customers

This metering project was a requirement of Government's Water Pricing Policy with all metering to be completed by 1 January 2007 to allow the new pricing system to proceed.

As far as was practical all meters were be in place throughout the county before year end. In addition to installing the meters, the Louth local Authorities decided to install Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) equipment. This will lead to increased accuracy and speed in meter readings and will help ensure that quarterly bills are issued promptly.

Alternative arrangements will be put in place for any premises where there is a shared connection or the actual connection could not be located. These works are to comply with the terms of National Water Pricing Policy, which is due to be full implemented in 2007.

Water Pricing Policy

We are required by legislation to recover the full marginal capital cost and operational costs associated with the provision of water services to all non-domestic users.

Consumers will be billed on the basis of on water usage, or where metering is not practicable, on basis of assessed water demand. In the case of premises that incorporate a residential element, an allowance to be offset against metered consumption will be allowed. Charges will apply for both water and sewage and will be based on actual costs of providing services. Consumers should make every effort to minimise leakage/wastage of water.

In the case of capital projects the marginal cost of providing services is to be recovered from non-domestic sector. Local contributions will be funded through development levies in respect of new commercial and housing developments, the later of which may be funded up to 40% of cost, at discretion of DEHLG.

Capital improvements that benefit existing users will be recovered as an element of water charges.

In the case of larger industrial type users specific agreements based on DEHLG model forms of agreement are to be put in place to address both capital and operational costs.

Improving Water and Waste Water Infrastructure

Tullyallen WWTP SLI – This project, which has now been completed, involved upgrading the plant to meet current loadings and allow limited future development.

Collon/Tallanstown/Louth WWTP – These scheme extensions are required to meet effluent standards and growing developments demands. Contract documentation was prepared for these schemes along with a scheme for Knockbridge and it is hoped that the contract for the parcel of 4 schemes will be awarded in early 2007.

Cooley RWS Stage 2 – This scheme is currently at preliminary stage where possible new water sources are being identified. A Preliminary Report was drafted with a view to finalising same in 2007. Some network improvements and extension of the scheme to the Omeath area also envisaged.

Blackrock Sewerage Scheme – Additional capacity to meet development demands in Blackrock will be required either by way of



Paving and environmental improvements in Carlingford.



Works on upgrading and extension to harbour at Port Oriel

upgrading the existing plant or by pumping sewerage into Dundalk WWTP for treatment or a combination of both. A brief for appointment of consultants was prepared and is currently with the Department for approval.

Blackrock Streams Improvement – This project was to address flooding difficulties caused due to increased development in the Blackrock area. Phase 2 is likely to commence during 2007.

Ardee Sewerage Scheme – This scheme, which will address effluent quality issues as well as current/future demands in Ardee, is currently at Preliminary Report Stage.

Mid-Louth Regional Water Scheme – This project, which is at Preliminary Report Stage, is dealing with future demands for water in the mid-Louth area. Urgent water quality issues in Dunleer were addressed through an advance contract. The next stage will involve seeking additional Water Abstraction Order for the Glyde and Dee.

Urban and Village Renewal Scheme

Projects funded by this programme in 2006 were:

Carlingford – paving and environmental improvements in Promenade Area.

Reaghstown – Environmental improvement works to old Bridle Path

Annagassan – Footpath installation and improvements in various locations

Drogheda – Conservation and restoration works to the Buttergate

Dundalk – Development of new walkway on Castletown River between Big Bridge and Tain Bridge

The Urban and Village Renewal Programme is now ended and there is some residual funding available for 2007/2008. It is intended to spend this funding in Dundalk Gateway to enhance and improve facilities. The projects will be:

- Completion of the Castletown Riverside Walkway (as above)
- Development of a Sensory Garden at St. Leonard's Garden

Marine Projects

Port Oriel, Clogherhead – Harbour Upgrading and Extension

Work on this 11.5 million euro project continued throughout 2006. While it was originally programmed to be completed by around mid year, additional funding became available from the Department of Marine, Communication and Natural Resources and the Local Authority which facilitated the construction of the longer pier option. Works are now expected to be completed early in 2007.

Broadband

Installation of the Metropolitan Area Network or MAN was completed in both Dundalk and Drogheda in 2006. The main focus of attention has now moved to the marketing of this service. Work commenced on installation of a MAN in Ardee Town and substantial progress was made on this project during 2006. This will be completed in the coming months.



Ariel view of Port Oriel, Clogherhead.

Goal 2



Sailing at Carlingford.



Louth Tourism – Greenore Golf Club.

Louth – A Quality Tourism Destination

Hospitality & Tourism

Louth Hospitality – Achievements 2006

The year 2006 saw the completion of a national advertising campaign which featured Luas Advertising, Press campaign via the Irish Times, Radio and Internet based advertising to promote Louth as a tourism destination. Tourism Officer attended tourism trade shows in Dublin, Belfast and UK promoting Louth as a tourism destination based on its heritage, culture and activities on offer. With regard to product development, the Carlingford Good Food Circle was founded to profile the quality food experience available in the area, the development of the Slieve Foy Looped walk and new walking signage in the Cooley peninsula was erected. As part of its involvement in the Dundalk Economic Development Group, a ten minute DVD was produced to promote the quality leisure and soft adventure product in the environs.

As part of the East Border Tourism Partnership, the Tourism Officer attracted over €130,000 in funding for rural village enhancement to Carlingford Omeath, Ardee and Tallanstown. The formation of the new Regional Tourism Partnership, Failte Ireland East & Midlands was established following the decision of the Minister of Tourism to



Vanessa Redgrave on set in film "How About You".

transfer the functions of the Regional Tourism Authorities to Failte Ireland in a bid to improve the regional spread of tourism and ensure a strong & sustainable industry.

The most current tourism figures just released indicate overseas tourism revenue to Louth is now worth €28 million to the local economy. This represents a €4 million on the previous years figures.

Film Commission

The Louth, Newry & Mourne Film Commission had a successful year in 2006, with 11 productions taking place in the region.

RTE's 'Trouble in Paradise' and the forthcoming Maeve Binchy feature film 'How about You' (starring Vanessa Redgrave, Imelda Staunton, and Brenda Fricker) would be to the fore, as well as many programmes for BBC Northern Ireland, UTV and Channel 4. The economic benefit to the region in 2006 was around €450,000, mainly consisting of hotel and services, crew, extras, food and spend in local restaurants and bars.

We were also part of a successful application for funding for the 'New Media Factory', a local training scheme for media practitioners which will commence in summer 2007. We dealt with approximately 100 professional enquiries during the course of the year. We also ran two films as part of the Tain Festival in the Spirit Store.



Filming of RTE's "Trouble in Paradise" at Rathescar, Dunleer.

GOAL 3

To Improve the quality of life for residents now and for future generations.

The growing importance of quality of Life issues in Louth is recognised by Louth Local Authorities and we continue to strive to :

- Ensure that all citizens can enjoy an adequate standard of housing accommodation appropriate to their needs,
- Enhance participation and improve standards in the cultural and sporting life of the community
- Make Louth a clean attractive County
- Provide an effective Emergency Service
- Plan for sustainable communities

Housing Programme

A mid-term review of the Action Plan for Social and Affordable Housing was carried out in 2006 in conjunction with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. This plan forms the cornerstone for all the main housing functions of the local authorities and provides the basis for year to year funding and allocations from the Department. Satisfactory progress was achieved in meeting the main targets in the plan throughout 2006.

Social Housing Needs Assessment

Housing needs continued to be assessed and reviewed throughout the year and a significant increase was noted in the numbers applying for social housing. At the end of 2006 this figure had risen to over 2800 with a significant percentage of these applications being from smaller household sizes, particularly one and two person units. The family size

make up of our housing lists continues to be an important factor in deciding on the mix of house types in our new schemes.

Social Housing Construction Programme

In keeping with the annual targets set down in the Action Plan, we continued to pursue an ambitious programme of new housing construction. Schemes were completed during the year at Mullagharlin Park (110) while construction continued on schemes at Blackrock (25), Mayfield (6), Termonfeckin (30), Louth Village (32), Clogherhead (27), Carlingford (55), Dundalk (Lios Dubh 68), and Drogheda (Newtown Meadows 76 and Marley's Lane 79).



Blackrock housing scheme.

Goal 3



Before and after house refurbishment.

In addition to above design and planning continued throughout the year on schemes scheduled to start in 2007 at Collon (19), Ardee (23), Dunleer (50/60), Dundalk (Rock Road 46, Glenwood 12 and Barrack Street, 15) and Drogheda (Mell 110, St. Laurence's Park 9 and St. Anthony's Park 2). The purchase of private houses on the open market now forms an important part of our social housing delivery targets and over 60 houses were purchased in this way in 2006.

Affordable Housing and Private Sites

Local Authorities are now expected to play an increasing role in both delivering and facilitating the delivery of affordable housing. We can directly build affordable houses on our own land under the "1999 Scheme" and we can ensure the delivery of affordable housing under the provisions of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000. We now maintain an affordable waiting list as well as a social waiting list and while the number of applicants to date for affordable housing is somewhat lower than might have been expected at 428 it is expected that this figure will rise significantly in the future.

During 2006 direct build schemes were under construction at Blackrock (6), Clogherhead (15), Carlingford (12), Dundalk (Lios Dubh 20) and Drogheda (Newtown Meadows 24 and Marley's Lane 16). In addition design and planning of new schemes was continued

throughout the year to ensure commencement of affordable housing in 2007 at Termonfeckin (16), Ardee (8), Collon (11), Dundalk (Muirhevnamor 14) and Drogheda (Mell 24).

Work was also under way in 2006 on private affordable building sites at Clogherhead (7), Carlingford (5) and Blackrock (5) while design and planning continued on similar sites at Collon (4) and Ardee (3).

Voluntary Housing

Facilitation and encouragement of the voluntary housing associations to play an increasing role in the provision of social and affordable housing forms an integral part of government policy and the local authorities Action Plans.

At years end voluntary schemes were under construction at Dundalk (Lios Dubh – Cluid – 50 units) and Drogheda (Newtown Meadows – Cluid 30 units and Marley's Lane – Respond – 33 units).

In addition planning and design was continued with a view to commencing construction in 2007 on schemes at Collon (Cluid – 19 units), Ardee (Oaklee – 39 units), Tullyallen (North and East – 11 units), Dundalk (Lis Na Dara – Cluid 37 units) and Drogheda (Mell – Oaklee – 30 units).

The Housing Strategy and Part V

A review of the Housing Strategy was undertaken during the year and this will dictate the percentage of houses in private developments to be allocated as social and affordable housing (currently 20%). Outturn in 2006 under Part V was relatively small but negotiations were concluded or in progress with several developers which should ensure a significantly increased delivery of social and affordable housing under this heading from 2007 onwards.

Housing Stock Maintenance and Improvement

Louth Local Authorities are responsible for management and maintenance of a rented housing stock of close to 3,000 dwellings. Ongoing programmes of maintenance and improvement of this stock continued during 2006. This involved ordinary routine maintenance as well as programmes of improvement works, the most significant being the continued installation of central heating coupled with significant refurbishment works so as to ensure that the Governments target of having all local authority rented houses provided with central heating by 2008 will be achieved. To date 151 houses have been completed with 30 still outstanding.

A Remedial Scheme at St. Finian's Park, Drogheda progressed while plans were well advanced for major multi-million regeneration schemes at Cox's Demense and Muirhevnamór, Dundalk.

Rental Accommodation Scheme (R.A.S.)

Work continued throughout the year in progressing the implementation of the Rental Accommodation Scheme whereby persons receiving supplementary rent allowance in private rented accommodation for 18 months or longer are transferred over to a new arrangement whereby the local authority enters into long term leases with private landlords to ensure continued provision of good quality rented accommodation. A large number of

properties were inspected throughout the year and at years end a total of 53 household units had been transferred over to the new system.

Traveller Accommodation

The Local Authorities continued to implement the provisions of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2005-2008 and targets for provision of accommodation throughout the County were largely met. The County Louth Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee met on 4 occasions during the year. A number of roadside encampments were dealt with and a sub-group of the S.I.M. Group prepared a strategy for interagency co-operation in delivery of services to travellers.

Homelessness

The County Louth Forum on Homelessness continued to monitor the progress in implementing the Homeless Action Plan 2004-2006 and arrangements for a review of the Plan were underway by years end, which would be guided by a review of the National Strategy carried out by the Department in 2006.

Financial subventions to the voluntary groups providing hostel accommodation continued in 2006 and direct subvention of B & B accommodation was provided where appropriate.

Loans, Grants and Subsidies

Applications for Disabled Persons Grants and Essential Repair Grants continued to rise in 2006 with well over 300 applications for D.P.G.'s and over 50 Essential Repair Grant applications. Total expenditure on these schemes was almost €2.5 million. Additional monies were provided in the 2007 budget (Dec 06) to ensure a continuous stream of funding for these grants.

Arts Recreations and Museum

Arts

Louth Local Authorities' Arts Service 2006

2006 saw the launch of the first Arts Plan for County Louth. The Plan was arrived at after a series of public meetings and workshops, and input from the Senior Management Team, the Strategic Policy Committee, and The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon. It was adopted in its entirety by Louth County Council, Drogheda Borough Council, and Dundalk Town Council. Launched by Ms Mary Cloake, Director, The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon, at a special reception in County Hall, the Arts Plan will lead and guide local authority policy and support for the arts until the end of 2008.

Each of the three Local Authority Arts Offices devised and implemented a stimulating artistic programme throughout the year. Music was strongly represented with performances by The Vanbrugh Quartet, The Irish Chamber Orchestra, Joanna McGregor, Liam O'Flynn, The Irish Consort, The National Chamber Choir, Irish Baroque Orchestra, the Stravinsky Quartet, Ballet Ireland, Michael McHale, and Augustin Maruri. Residencies included a Street Theatre Artist in Dundalk and a Contemporary Dancer in Drogheda. Louth's festival

programme was strengthened by the addition of Artlings, a children's festival in Dundalk, which joins Leanbh in Drogheda, both aimed at younger audiences. The Drogheda Arts Festival and Ardee Baroque both built on earlier success, and provided strong programmes for their respective audiences. The Basement Gallery presented 11 exhibitions in 2006, which included site-specific work by Garret Phelan, and Noel Bowler's critically-acclaimed photographic work, "The Joy".

Arts projects with community groups included work with RehabCare Resource Centre, young people, Traveller women, St. Oliver's Hospital, various schools, and older people. The continuing development of Drogheda Youth Dance Company is an initiative which may be duplicated throughout the county.

In addition, there are a number of aspects of the Arts Service which are delivered jointly, including the CreateLouth funding opportunities and certain agreed projects. *Íomhá 2006* was the title given to one of these projects.

Íomhá means image in Irish, and this exhibition was comprised of the work of five Louth visual artists – Anthony Collins, Seán Cotter, Clíodhna Cunningham, Brian Hegarty and Mary Donnelly. These artists were selected by guest curators Ruairí Ó Cuív and Clíodhna Shaffrey.

The selected artists work in a variety of media and styles including collage, photography, oils, and print-making, and *Íomhá 2006* ably demonstrated the range of contemporary arts practice in the county. Working with the three Arts Officers in organising the initiative were a number of partners within the county including the Droichead Arts Centre and Louth Leader. *Íomhá 2006* was exhibited in the Droichead Arts Centre and the Basement Gallery, Dundalk, where it was crated and shipped to Finland for exhibition in the Patruunagalleria in the town of Lapua. This unique linkage with Finland was developed over the preceding years by close contact between the Leader companies in Louth and Finland, and the local authorities. The participating artists travelled with the exhibition and spoke in the gallery about their work.

Back in Ireland, the initiative continued with a two-day Professional Practice seminar for all visual artists in Louth, where curators and



Highlanes Gallery.