

Housing, Economic, Community & Social Development

The Housing functions of Louth Local Authorities continue to expand and develop to meet the ever growing needs of our community for better standards of accommodation. Housing issues were high on the public agenda during the year in question and problems and growing waiting lists combine to demand a wide ranging and proactive response from us as housing service providers. Our overall objective is to ensure that all citizens can enjoy an adequate standard of housing accommodation appropriate to their needs. The Community & Enterprise section operates on a County at Large basis and oversees the community, social and economic development of the county including the two major urban towns of Dundalk and Drogheda.



- ▲ Blackrock Social Housing Scheme
- ▼ Rosemary Collier (Arts Officer) and Valerie Atherton (RAPID) from Drogheda Borough Council receive their "Excellence in Local Government Award" for Social and Community Development through the Arts in Drogheda, from Minister for the Environment Mr. Dick Roche TD.



LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL

1. ACTION PLAN FOR SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Early in 2004 all Local Authorities were requested by the Minister for the Environment to prepare comprehensive 5 Year Action Plans covering all their housing operations for the period 2004-2008. These plans were submitted to the Department at the end of May, 2004 and discussions subsequently took place with Department Officials to agree the final content of the plans as a basis for commitment of funding for a wide range of housing actions over the 5 year period.

2. SOCIAL HOUSING PROVISION

The Social Housing Waiting List at the end of 2004 consisted of 426 applicants with an average family size of 2.42 persons.

A comprehensive 3 year statutory assessment of Social Housing requirements is due to be carried out early in 2005.

The following is a summary of Social Housing construction activity during 2004:-



Carlingford Social Housing

Location	No. of Houses	Completed during year	Under construction at Years End	In Planning/Tender Stage at Years End
Blackrock I	36	36	-	-
O'Carroll Street, Ardee I	26	-	26	-
Termonfeckin I	28	-	28	-
Castlebellingham II	9	-	9	-
Louth Village I	32	-	-	32
Mayfield Drive	6	-	-	6
Blackrock II	25	-	-	25
Termonfeckin II	32	-	-	32
Clogherhead	20	-	-	20
Total:	214	36	63	115

3. VOLUNTARY HOUSING

The Council continues to encourage and facilitate provision of Social Housing Schemes by approved Voluntary Housing Bodies. One such scheme of 8 No. two storey family type houses was completed at Main Street, Collon. Further schemes were being planned by Oaklee Housing Association at Tierney Street, Ardee (approximately 50 units) and by North and East Housing Association at Tullyallen (11 units). The Council also assisted St. John of God Trust with provision of a five unit dwelling for people with disabilities at Blackrock.

4. AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Pre-Planning discussions were held with developers of approximately 30 private housing projects during the year with a view to entering into agreements under Part V of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 for delivery of social and affordable housing. While no affordable units were actually delivered under this system in 2004, nevertheless, discussions were well advanced in a sufficient number of cases to ensure finalisation of a number of Part V agreements in the near future. The Council itself also became involved in direct provision of affordable



Clogherhead Affordable Housing

housing and the following schemes were being undertaken at years end:-

- O'Carroll Street, Ardee - 8 units under construction
- Blackrock II - 6 units at tender stage
- Clogherhead - 10 units at planning stage

5. HOUSING ESTATE MANAGEMENT

Housing Maintenance/Improvement

The programme of central heating installation in the O.P.D. stock continued during the year. Phase I consisting of 24 units was completed and Phase II consisting of a further 24 units was commenced.

A planned maintenance programme of replacing windows/doors/fascias/soffits in 14 rented houses was also commenced. In addition, an application was submitted to the Department for funding for a four year programme of central heating installation in the general housing stock (approximately 200 units lacking this facility). Work also continued on routine maintenance works to the general housing stock and repair of casual vacancies.

Tenant Participation

Further progress was made throughout the year in developing a pilot estate management programme at Ferdia Park, Ardee, with further improvement works being carried out in the estate and extension of the pilot project into a number of additional estates.

Anti-Social Behaviour

A new "Anti-Social Behaviour Policy" was adopted by the Council early in 2004 and put into operation straight away with investigations initiated in 12 cases by years end.

Housing Rents/Sales

A revised Housing Rents Scheme was implemented from April, 2004 and all tenants had their rent levels reviewed in line with up-to-date incomes and family circumstances. Rents were increased in the majority of cases but these increases were directly linked to increased incomes and were designed to avoid undue hardship in any case. A total of 50 tenants applied to purchase their existing dwellings under the Tenant Purchase Scheme, and 20 transactions were completed during the year.

6. TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION

The Council co-ordinated the activities of the County Louth Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee which was re-constituted after the June Local Elections. The Committee met on 4 occasions during the year.

A revised Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme 2005-2008 was prepared and put on public display in November, 2004. The Council provided temporary halting site facilities for a number of indigenous traveller families at Killineer, Drogheda and also housed one family in permanent housing.

A number of indiscriminate roadside encampments were also dealt with throughout the year.

7. HOMELESSNESS

The Council co-ordinated the operation of the County Louth Forum on Homelessness which met on 2 occasions. A new Action Plan on Homelessness covering the 3 year period 2004-2006 was adopted by the Council in May, 2004 and contains a total of eighteen separate actions designed to further reduce the problems of homelessness throughout the county at large during the 3 year period.

8. HOUSING LOANS, GRANTS AND SUBSIDIES

In line with trends in recent years, activity under this heading was relatively low with the exception of Disabled Persons Grants and Essential Repairs Grants where demand continues to be strong. The number of Disabled Persons Grants applications received increased from 80 in 2003 to 197 in 2004.

ACTIVITY 2004 (2003 FIGURES IN BRACKETS)	D.P.Gs.	E.R.Gs.
Applications Received	197 (80)	13 (16)
Applications Approved	63 (52)	0 (-)
Applications Paid	47 (48)	5 (-)



Castlebellingham Housing Scheme

9. COUNCIL BUILDINGS AND MISCELLANEOUS BUILDING PROJECTS

Old Gaol

Work was completed on a major refurbishment at Phase II of the Old Gaol at the Crescent, Dundalk.

Ardee Castle

Negotiations were well advanced with Dúchas, the Courts Service and other interested bodies with a view to installing adequate fire safety measures with the aim of putting the Castle back into public use in 2005.

County Hall

Major renovations were carried out at County Hall to provide improved access for people with disabilities.



Gaol – prior to refurbishment



Gaol – following refurbishment

Civil Defence Building, Carlingford

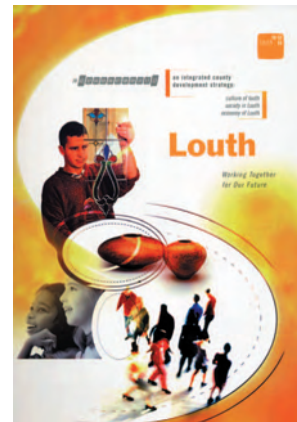
Works on the provision of a new roof, toilets and other necessary improvements were near completion at the end of 2004.

COMMUNITY & ENTERPRISE

1. LOUTH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT BOARD (CDB)

Louth County Development Board (CDB) met six times throughout 2004. An extensive review of the Strategy for the last 2 years was completed with progress on all actions being identified and documented. A specific project undertaken was the installation of database of all grants available to the community/voluntary sector, business, investors etc to Louth. It is accessible through links from www.louthcoco.ie and www.louthcdb.ie :

- Louth4Business
- Louth4Community
- Louth4SocialEnterprise.



CDB Strategy report

2. LOUTH SOCIAL INCLUSION MEASURES GROUP (SIM)

Social Inclusion Measure's Group (SIM), met seven times during the year and Membership of the group expanded considerably in 2004.

During 2004 the following specific actions were undertaken by Louth SIM Group:

1. SIM Matrix was updated and continues to be updated
2. Cohesion Plan was prepared and submitted to D/CR&GA
3. Integrated Targeted Action Plan on Youth was submitted to D/CR&GA for funding
4. Endorsement process of local development agency plans was carried out.

3. LOUTH COUNTY COMMUNITY FORUM

The Forum continued to meet on a monthly basis throughout 2004. In June, elections took place for the new period of the Forum, and this was done in conjunction with the Local Elections. Members of the Forum now have representation on a wide range of bodies/agencies.

4. COMHAIRLE NA NÓG

2004 was another busy year, with staff having continued liaison with the National Children's Office in relation to the organisation of Comhairle na nÓg 2005. An application for funding to the National Children's Office to cover expenses in 2005 was submitted and €2,500 was successfully secured.

Staff continued to participate in the National Review Process on Comhairle na nÓg.

5. RAPID COUNTY MONITORING GROUP (CMG)



Discussion workshop – Louth Comhairle na nÓg

RAPID County Monitoring Group (CMG) responsible for the monitoring of progress of RAPID Programmes in Dundalk and Drogheda met bi-monthly throughout 2004 and are facilitated by the RAPID Co-Ordinators.

6. REPRESENTATION

Staff of Community & Enterprise continued to represent Louth County Council on a large number of external bodies and organisations in the areas of childcare, partnership and employment.

SOCIAL INCLUSION UNIT – ACHIEVEMENTS 2004

In 2004 the Social Inclusion Unit placed an emphasis on the development of Social Inclusion objectives in the new Corporate Plan 2005 – 2009. The unit also focused largely on the issue of accessibility to local authority services for persons with a disability and for disadvantaged communities, particularly local authority estates (Tenant Participation). The unit will continue this focus in 2005. Among the many projects/initiatives undertaken throughout the year were:

1. Compilation of Barcelona Declaration Project Implementation Plan 2004 – 2005
2. Review of 1997 Tenant Participation in Estate Management policy (addition of guidelines on Tenant Participation in Estate Management model)
3. Incorporate Social Inclusion objectives into new Corporate Plan and Operational Plans
4. Assistance to the Library Service in piloting Social Inclusion objective (Learning Centre in Co. Library)
5. Three Disability Awareness Raising seminars
6. Completion of updated 'Social Profile of County Louth
7. Completion of joint SIU / Dundalk RAPID / Le Chéile CDP research project examining the extent, causes and possible solutions to Indebtedness in Cox's Demesne housing estate, Dundalk
8. Completion of Housing Management Initiative Grant Scheme Research Project examining local authority estate design including alleyway and lighting pilot projects in Dundalk (Muirhevamór) and Drogheda (Moneymore)

LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL LED PEACE II TASK FORCE

In 2004 a total of twenty eight projects were supported by the Louth County Council led Peace II Task Force. Through this funding an overall sum of €2,912,914.26 was committed to the twenty eight projects. Projects were approved through the facilitation of the Louth Peace II Task Force and Assessment Committee Meetings. All projects qualified for funding as they met the specific criteria of the programme namely:

- Addressing the legacy of the conflict
- Taking opportunities arising from Peace
- Paving the way to reconciliation

LOUTH/BANBRIDGE SOCIAL ECONOMY PROGRAMME

Louth County Council and Banbridge District Council were successful in accessing funding to deliver a Cross Border Social Economy Programme in the two Districts.

A Development Officer, was appointed in August, 2004 and is actively working with local communities in both areas to deliver the programme.

LOUTH HOSPITALITY

Incorporated in 2004 this County Development Board Initiative was formed with the specific aim of developing the tourism product in County Louth and maximising the economic spin generated by tourism activity. With the wealth of heritage, Celtic legends and over 30 miles of coastline, Louth has the potential to be a premier tourism destination on the east coast.

The formulation of the County Tourism Development & Marketing Plan 2004-2007 charts the route to success for the county. The two pronged approach advocates the development and improvement of Louth's natural assets and tourism product coupled with intensive marketing campaign at both a local and national level in order to fast track Louth's progress on the tourism barometer.

Marketing material produced by the company is of county wide benefit and will spread the spatial distribution of tourism flow within Louth.

LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL LED PEACE II TASK FORCE FUNDING AN EXAMPLE OF 2004 GRANT RECIPIENTS

Promoter	Project Description	Grant Allocation
Bush Post Primary School	Development of Bush Community Meeting and IT Facilities	€118,000
Dundalk Media Centre	Delivery of media training targeting community associations	€140,000
Muirhevna Mor Football Club	To provide an all weather pitch with security fence, dressing rooms & floodlights	€249,000
Louth Hospitality	Putting Louth on the Tourism Map	€249,000
Ardee Concert Band	Development of Bohemian Centre and Bandroom	€231,000
The Glen Play Area	To provide an open play area & scenic space in Drogheda	€100,000
Holy Family Parish Prefab Development Centre	To provide a facility which will cater for the social, recreational, educational and cultural needs of people from Rapid areas.	€50,000



Louth Hospitality exhibit at Holiday World, Dublin

Training provided by Louth Hospitality aimed at product providers and festival organisers will ensure the long term goal of establishing a calendar of events in Louth which will attract visitors during the shoulder seasons.

Further details of the plan and marketing activities can be found on www.louthholidays.com

DUNDALK RAPID PROGRAMME

The RAPID Programme was introduced in 2001, with a focus on disadvantaged urban areas. Two estates in Dundalk, Cox's Demesne and Muirhevnamor are included in this programme. The Dundalk RAPID Action Plan outlines a number of strategies to address issues of social and physical disadvantage as identified through ongoing consultation with the RAPID communities. Key needs tackled in 2004 included the need to:

- Modernise estate layout
- Development of estate based facilities
- Reduce educational disadvantage
- Increased youth and children orientated services
- Reduce unemployment rates in both estates especially youth unemployment.

Funding was secured for a number of key projects relating to the above needs during 2004 including a number of funding streams which were introduced specifically for RAPID areas such as:

- Muirhevnamor Community Centre. Additional funding secured for the completion of this priority project. €135,000 – Louth County Council led PEACE II Task Force.
- Playground facility in Cox's Demesne - €72,000.
- Under the RAPID Playground Scheme 2004, Dundalk RAPID Programme was allocated €72,000. This funding will be directed towards such development in Muirhevnamor.
- RAPID Estate Enhancement Scheme - €60,000. A number of projects were identified in conjunction with community representatives and engineering staff, Dundalk Town Council, relating to estate layout and open spaces.
- An employment initiative in Cox's Demesne has been initiated and commenced in November 2004. This initiative is targeted at males aged 18-24 years and is lead by Dundalk Employment Partnership, Dundalk Local Employment Service and Dundalk RAPID Programme.

- Continued consultation with the RAPID communities regarding developments in their estates with the aim of rebuilding the confidence of these communities and instilling local ownership. A number of applications submitted during 2004 for funding to various funding streams including the Dormant Accounts Fund and the Equality for Women Measure (RAPID Strand) await a response.

DROGHEDA RAPID PROGRAMME

- Investment in Drogheda RAPID Areas in 2004 came to €9,690,594 (including €3.8m in the Drogheda Swimming Pool Grant). This level of investment has impacted on a wide range of activity in all sectors and includes capital projects which will be completed in 2005.
- Highlights of 2004 in Drogheda RAPID Areas include:
 - €1.4m from Dep. Of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme for the first purpose built Community Childcare Facility in the County. The facility will be located in Moneymore Drogheda and will cater for 100 children
 - East Border Regional Support for development of Community Safety focusing on anti social behaviour and community awareness.
 - Commencement and completion of Research into needs of Older People 65+ to be launched shortly
 - Completion of a Neighbourhood Play area at Rathmullen and funding for a third Play area in the Glen at Yellowbatter .
 - Completion of environmental works at Yellowbatter
 - Completion of Housing Estate Enhancement Scheme.
 - Success of the Community Environmental Initiative funded by FAS and operated as part of the Jobs Initiative scheme and managed by Moneymore Community House Ltd. in cooperation with DBC and residents from seven RAPID areas.
 - Increase in Community Participation and involvement
 - Clear evidence of reorientation of resources into Drogheda RAPID areas
 - Significant increase in attendance by residents at community meetings held throughout 2004
 - National Award for Arts Projects in Drogheda RAPID Areas. This involved collaboration between the DBC Arts office and Drogheda RAPID.



Announcement of funding for Community Childcare Facility at Moneymore