County Leitrim Partnership tackling social exclusion

The Board of County Leitrim Partnership pictured after their September meeting. Back row: **Martin Dolan, Dónal Ó Scollai, Gerry Cornyn, Kathleen McCaffrey, John Comiskey, Tom Lavin,** *Manager,* **Pat Monaghan, Johnny McCauley, Francis Murray, Dónal Fox,** *Enterprise Worker.* Front row: **Cllr Gerry McGee, Larry Bateson, ADM, Peter Tiernan, Chairman,Úna McManus, Rose O'Brien, Helena McGuire, Joe O'Donnell.** *Missing from the photograph is Mervyn Richardson.*

'You've never had it so good", Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan once famously told the British people, during the post war boom. It was a phrase that would be forever associated with the aristocratic Tory leader, which later came to be seen an example of high-handed arrogance.

At a local level, Macmillan's declaration rings true for many people. Never has there been so much building in progress and never were as many people as well off as they are at the end of the year 2000.

But there are many people who cannot take advantage of the good times. Socially excluded in one form or another, it is important that they are given the help and assistance to make a better life for themselves and their families. Among those groups are the unemployed, the underemployed, small holders, people with disabilities, the aged, young people at risk, Travellers, lone parents, women and isolated rural men.

The County Leitrim Partnership, whose head office is in Drumshanbo, is dedicated to tackling social exclusion and to improving the quality of life for many people in the county. The Partnership, was formed in 1996, with the aim of tackling disadvantage in multi-sectoral way involving statutory, community, voluntary and social partners.

Having successfully completed its three year Action Plan, the Partnership is about to implement its blueprint for the next five years. The 210 page document which was drawn up after extensive consultation with local communities, the social partners, the statutory and voluntary bodies, is a clearly focused strategic plan to tackle disadvantage in Leitrim.

The plan has attracted funding of £1.89m for the next three years from Area Development Management (ADM) under the Local Development Measure of the Social Inclusion Sub-Programme of the Regional Operational Programme for the Border-Midland-Western Region.

The size of the allocation reflected the impact that the Partnership has had in the county under the leadership of Board Chairman, Drumreilly man, Peter Tiernan and Manager, Tom Lavin and staff. The case for funding and for the adoption of the plan was made before the ADM Appraisal Committee in September.

Along with Mr Tiernan and Mr Lavin, Board members, Pat Monaghan, Cllr Damian Brennan, Kathleen McCaffrey and Mai McMorrow, together with Administrator, Orla Blessing represented the Partnership.

Over the next three years, the Partnership will work under three broad headings; Services for the Unemployed, Youth Services and Community Development.

The Services for the Unemployed programme will focus upon improving the prospects of the long term unemployed and those most distanced from the labour market to access suitable gainful employment and/or self-employment through education,/training, work experience, job placement, enterprise and the social economy.

Under its Youth Services programme, the Partnership will implement a range of measures designed to prevent underachievement in education and provide routes to training and employment for early school leavers. The strategy will involve engaging with young people, schools, youth groups, community groups, parents and relevant agencies.

Community development strategies focus upon building the capacity of local groups to improve the quality of life in their communities. In addition to support for community groups, special programmes targeting the needs of the elderly, of people with disabilities, disadvantaged women and men and lone parents will be put in place. Support will also be provided for the development of small scale community infrastructure.

In each case the Partnership will work closely with relevant statutory, voluntary and social partners to develop effective and integrated responses.

HELLO TO THE HILLS

The Sliabh an Iarainn Hillwalking Club celebrates its fifth anniversary this year and is stronger than ever. It holds its festivals in June and September when large groups of enthusiastic walkers rediscover the breathtaking beauties of Sliabh an Iarainn and its fantastic views, or enjoy gentle rambles through bog, forest and quiet country lanes designed for the less adventurous.

Throughout the rest of the year smaller groups or individuals are guided at weekends by appointment (phone/fax 078-41569, 41522 or 41302 for information)

All are welcome – so get up off the sofa, switch off the TV and come and get some fresh air, fun and exercise on the summit of Sliabh an Iarainn.

Jack Lee