

STEPPING STONES

The Newsletter of the South Lough Neagh Area

Spring 2012

The big Society

The question is often asked just what is 'The Big Society'?

The official answer to that question is *"The Big Society is the Government's vision of a society where individuals and communities have more power and responsibility, and use this to create better neighborhoods and local services."*

The ideals of The Big Society revolves round three main central sectors...

First, what can The State, i.e. Government and government funded bodies, do for us.

Second, what can we do for ourselves i.e. commercial enterprises, local investment etc.

Third, what can we do for others? This is now commonly being called Third Sector Involvement.

The Third Sector

Voluntary enterprise, - community groups, - regeneration and social enterprise groups, along with their associated skilled practitioners are all at the heart of this Third Sector.

Vanguard Areas

The wider concepts of The Big Society are being already pushed forward in what are being called Vanguard Areas, areas earmarked for Big Society Capital Spend along with government departmental support to bring together 'Engaging Partners' so as to achieve set targets and bring forward innovative local projects which lie within the embrace



of Big Society principals and so enhance local communities.

To date only four pathfinder Vanguard areas have been established. None of these are in Northern Ireland.

Why is this so?

A recent market survey carried out by a leading Consulting Group reported:

"As the market currently stands there are only a handful of organisations that have the necessary scale of performance characteristics to accept meaningful capital injections from Big Society Capital - the number of potential area groups on view will need to considerably develop their size and the scope of what

they are currently offering to their communities so as to qualify."

The Challenge

There in lies the challenge. It also begs the question, just what are we doing as a society in the South Lough Neagh Area to develop our grasp of The Big Society and so enhance our standing towards the point where we have enveloped all the necessary characteristics to qualify for meaningful Big Society Capital Spend and so further enhance our local communities. The content of this issue of Stepping Stones outlines our current position and the steps being taken to reach forward and outwards with new enterprises and new ideas.

Youth Residential at Corrymeela, Ballycastle



A number of our young people and their leaders from the 8 youth groups in the area took part in a weekend residential on Good Relations and Civic Leadership, and Leadership Skills.

The young people explored prejudice and attitudes, and gained a understanding of cultural difference, and of a shared history.

They gained confidence in

putting their point of view across and of being listened to, and a greater understanding of the interdependence of people and communities.

They had the opportunity to develop relationships across the groups and leaned the importance of team work and community, and develop planning, organisation and leadership skills.

They had fun!

Testimonials

"Really enjoyed the weekend, learnt some interesting things".

Gerard Lavery

"Was a very valuable experience, made me think about the different approaches to things. The whole

weekend was great, thanks very much for the opportunity, I'm looking forward to the next residential".

Maria Lavery

"Was very fun, I enjoyed it!"

Liz Hoyle

Advance Notice

SLNRA's AGM will take place this year in 13th March 2012.
Everyone welcome and refreshments will be served.

Useful Community Contacts

Youth Group Contacts:

Sarsfields Youth Club
Leanne McCusker
T: 02838 340071

Wolftones Youth Club
Liz Hoy/Lisa Tighe
T: 07842 699861

John Mitchell Youth Club
Maria Lavery
T: 07895 211088

Birches Youth Club
John Richie
T: 07872 067411

Maghery Youth Club
Siobhan Hoey
T: 07944 092601

Milltown Youth Club
Alan McElmurry
T: 07969 537568

Scotch Street Youth Club
Alan mcCann
T: 07548 650687

Vinecash Youth Club
Gordon Woolsey
T: 07599 806050

Senior Citizen Clubs

Derrytrasna Senior Citizen Group
Meet every Wednesday in Sarsfields Community Centre
Contact: Eileen McAlinden
T: 028 3834 0556

Aghagallon Senior Citizen Group
Meet every Tuesday in Cranagh Hall
Contact: Eilish McGrath
T: 028 9265 1926
M: 07786 886597

Diamond Senior Citizen Group
Meet every Tuesday in Maghery Community Hall
Contact: Anne Fox T: 028 3885 1113

The Birches Day Care and Cosy Club - Meet every Tuesday in The Birches Cosy Club Centre
Contact: Edith Stevenson
T: 028 3885 2041

Art in the Wetlands

Local Loughshore sightseeing visit recommended



The 'Sliotar' sculpture with artist Niall Walsh in the background

The Art in the Wetland project is now complete and local residents will be well aware of a range of distinctive decorative artwork sculptures placed at strategic points along the Lough shore.

The project was a joint venture between SLNRA and Craigavon Borough Council and the designs were by commissioned artists and cast mostly in bronze by various sculptors in Ireland.

One in particular, The Navigators, positioned at the Diamond in Maghery village depicts a traditional scene of two lough-shore fishermen coming ashore carrying their oars.

This sculpture proved difficult to cast and necessitated several visits by three delegated committee members from South Lough Neagh Regeneration committee to the workshop of sculptor, Mr William Malone, at the Irish College of Art in Dublin, to check on, and advance its progress.

To see the various sections being actually cast in molten metal into their individual moulds and then later, somewhat like a jigsaw puzzle, being joined and welded together to form the final feature, proved a most interesting experience for the small delegation.

The full range of the Art in the Wetlands sculptures now in their final positions can be viewed at

Maghery, where 'The Navigators' adorn the village Diamond; at Derrytrasna a very local theme 'Running The Lines' can be seen; at Oxford Island 'The Eel Retreat' is positioned near the discovery centre; at Aghacommon 'The Sliotar', or hurling ball is on display; at Kinnego near the marina traditional 'Wings' adorn the scene, and at Aghagallon perched on a wall for all to see is the 'Sciathog', or the 'Potato Basket'. All are worthy of a Sunday sightseeing visit, a local 'treasure hunt' so to speak. Get weaving.



'Navigators' sculpture

AGHAGALLON AND DISTRICT WALKING GROUP



UPCOMING WALKING DATES

Sunday 26th February
The Ramparts Derrytrasna
Sunday 11th March
Lady Dixon Park
Sunday 25th March
Rea's Wood Antrim

All walks about two miles, not too hilly, and not too fast ... see Winter/Spring programme below.

STARTING POINT:
Aghagallon Chapel
at 2.00pm

(unless otherwise advised)

Walk Leaders and contacts:

Gerry Lavery: (T) 028 9265 1519
(M) 07973 543013
Julie McCool: (T) 028 9265 1364
Pauline Downing: (T) 028 3834 5347
Denis O'Rourke: (T) 028 9265 2626

Old skills, new friends and The Big Society

Making contacts and reaching out to other communities particularly communities diverse from ourselves is an all important feature in regeneration and prompting work in the Big Society.

To this end SLNRA has in past months carried out a programme entitled Old Skills New Friends. This programme drew together people from the Lough Shore with members of the Clones Community Forum. Here we swapped the old skills of boat making from the Lough Shore with those of Clones Lace Making. Not only did this programme provide an insight into old crafts but was a stepping stone to making new friends; friendships which have since proven valuable and sustaining in the on going



expansion of cross community enterprises.

Once Clones and South Lough Neagh were connected by the trading artery known as the Ulster Canal first opened in 1841 linking the two areas. Efforts backed by such groups as Waterways Ireland, local regeneration groups, and local authorities support the

experimental work that has recently commenced at the Clones end of the Canal. In the light of recent economic reversals the successful continuation of the complete venture is now in severe doubt. This is very disappointing as it could only be highly beneficial to the economic regeneration of the Backwater valley in total.

This would be The Big Society really in action. In line with existing highly successful waterway development already in place through out Ireland, such a scheme could only bade well for the national and local economy as a whole. But Big Spend participation and its associated monetary input are not just necessary but a necessity.

Bio-Diversity among our farmers



On farm sunflowers grown as part of local farm bio-diversification programme

Now completed, but still leaving positive results, the Bio-Diversity programme was geared to assist local farmers. This programme promoted by SLNRA and supported by DARD set out to open up new avenues of income for local farmers who were prepared to enter into new bio-diversity farming ventures. These included habitat protection programmes, wild life protection programmes, and the diversified use of wetlands and marginal lands.

The programme proved popular and received excellent support from our local farming community and for many their work is still ongoing with both the community and the environment continuing to benefit.

Derryinver 'Ulster in Bloom' committee and their young helpers



Every year at this time members of the Derryinver Community Association are keen to start work on enhancement of their village in order to be ready for the judging of the 'Ulster in Bloom' competition.

The group has been entering the quaint village of Charlestown into this competition since 1999 and have received either a 2nd or 3rd place prize every year since in the Small Village category.

Hazel Guiney secretary of the

group told us, "We plant about 6,000 plants every year and most are supplied by Craigavon Borough Council. We find that the younger members of the village are very enthusiastic and enjoy helping out with the planting as it involves a lot of hard work for everyone.

"Entering the competition has transformed our village and it is now quite a tourist attraction."

We wish the committee 'Good Luck' in this year's competition.

Colourful Historical Exhibition hosted in Maghery Community Hall

Over the weekend of the 11th and 12th of November, South Lough Neagh Historical Society in association with other local voluntary groups presented a spectacular two day exhibition in the Community Hall in Maghery village.

The exhibition which was opened by Dr Frank X McCorry author and researcher from Lurgan, centered round the theme of the life and times of John and Jenny Mitchel radical thinkers and revolutionaries in the second half of the 19th Century.

The exhibition picked up on the theme of their colourful life story, their friendships and associations and their opposition to the establishment of the times, leading to transportation to the colonies before escaping to America to become embroiled in the American Civil war of 1861-65. The story line is very much along the lines of Ireland's own 'Gone With The Wind' story, only this time the story is true and equally, if not more, poignant.

Each evening illustrated lectures were given by Dr Anthony Russell a lecturer in historical studies at Anglia-Ruskin University in



(L-R): T. Glenny, R Greenaway, Andrew Martin, Adel Craeley, Michael Branagh, Gerry Dogherty, Dr. Anthony Russell, Dr. Frank McCorry, Mary McAlinden and Bernadette Donnelly.

Cambridge complemented by Dr Tess Maginess, a lecturer at Queen's University Belfast who outlined the local connections of John Mitchel's wife, the former Jenny Verner. They had been married in Drumcree Parish Church in 1837.

The final evening concluded with a discussion session where the capacity audience posed questions to a panel of experts on the life and times of the 19th Century, which prompted a lively debate.

The entire presentation was received with great acclaim and due recognition needs to be

given to the organisers and to all who participated in hosting and promoting such a contemporary ground-breaking venture.

The event was funded by The International Fund for Ireland - Community Bridges Programme, the Dept of Foreign Affairs, The Community Relations Council and Craigavon Borough Council thorough South Lough Neagh Regeneration Association's Good Relations Programme.

■ **Additional information from Thomas Glenny, Chairman South Lough Neagh Historical Society Tel: 028 3885 1795**

Testimonials

I was very happy to attend and give the folks at the exhibition. Participation by everyone was first class particularly in the debate on the last evening. The questions to the panel were most challenging and showed the mind of a very informed audience.

Best wishes for the future,

*Anthony Russel, Newry, Co. Down
26th November 2011*

I would like to express my sincere thanks for being accorded the privilege of opening your wonderful exhibition last weekend. Many congratulations to the whole team on your initiative in hosting such an historical event. You do provide a special leadership which must not be underestimated.

*Very best wishes.
Frank McCorry, Lurgan
21st November 2011*

Having received a surprise invitation to attend your exhibition I was indeed delighted, if not surprised at the wonderful nature of its content depicting an Irish story little known about in Ireland. Your good work surpasses much of what I have seen in other parts.

*Congratulations. Keep it up!
A member of Bangor Historical Society, Co. Down.*



Intergenerational workshops



The P6 & P7 pupils from St. Mary's primary schools in Derrytrasna and Maghery enjoyed taking part an intergenerational workshop with the members of Diamond Day Care and Derrytrasna Day Care groups.

The feast of St. Bridget, February 1st celebrates, among other things, the arrival of longer, warmer days and the early signs of spring. This workshop was coincided with the feast day and both children and the users of the two senior citizen groups made the symbolic St. Bridget's Crosses in a warm and relaxed atmosphere.



Funding received for Access to Basic Health & Wellbeing Programme

South Lough Neagh Regeneration Association and the Loughshore Care Partnership secured funding from The Southern Organisation for Action in Rural Areas (SOAR) for two years to deliver a Access to Basic Health & Wellbeing Programme for the inhabitants of the southern Lough Neagh area. The project coordinator Louise McAlinden commenced work on the project in October 2011 and is located at Quay House, 1 Annaloiste Road, Lurgan, Cragiavon. Telephone: 028 3831 7898

The programme aims to deliver:

Overarching Themes

- Ensuring information about care and support is available for all local people

- Providing information, encouragement and opportunities for people in the benefit area to make healthy lifestyle choices
- Creating awareness of the social responsibility of agencies
- Promoting access to basic health services
- Supporting carers to help them deal with the stresses of their demanding role
- Promote social intergenerational activities
- Tackle isolation and loneliness and promote a more caring community
- Improve the ability of the voluntary and community sector within the area of benefit to provide services for older people on behalf of statutory agencies
- Actively promoting independence and well being, rather than just being reactive.



Louise McAlinden, Project Support officer

This project will especially target, older people, youth, families on low income and vulnerable adults to provide access to a basic Health & Well Being service. The coordination of access to agencies services will improve the quality of life for those who live within the south Loughshore area while helping to reduce deprivation and rural isolation.

Annual General Meeting

Date: 13th March 2012 at 7.00pm

Guest speaker: Brian Cassells

Venue:

M/s Norman Emerson Office building
Derryadd, Ardmore, Lurgan
(*Kindly granted*)

A special appeal is being made to everyone along the south lough shore to attend as wider support and help is needed by the South Lough Neagh Regeneration Committee to push forward new programmes of local regeneration. **Remember this is your area.**

A Decade Of Centenaries: Commemorating A Shared History



We are entering a Decade of Centenaries which will be acknowledged with events commemorating our shared history.

With this in mind SLNRA will be hosting a number of training events understanding 'A Decade of Centenaries' and its impact on Society. Through group discussions key historical events from 1912 to 1922 in Irish History will be examined to gain understanding of how commemorating the Centenary of Events may impact on individuals and communities.

Dates to be arranged and places are limited so if you are interested please call 028 3885 2550 or email slnra@btconnect.com to reserve a place. Or obtain further information

In this decade of centenaries, we should not only understand how the conflicts generated at these times came about, but also to examine them in a way that allows all of us in Ireland and the UK to move beyond the causes and use the experience to help those caught in conflict in other parts of the globe.

Have you planned for the future of your farm?



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- Identify additional sources of income both on farm and off farm
- Plan for succession/retirement with financial support for Legal or Financial advice (£250 per farm business)
- Identify training and development opportunities and financial support
- Develop a positive Action Plan for the future

For more about how we could help you, get in touch: 0845 026 7539; mentoring@countryrural.co.uk or visit our website:www.countryrural.co.uk

IMPORTANT INFORMATION – BE DIGITAL SWITCH OVER READY

Everyone should ensure that they are digital ready and that all television sets are capable of receiving the digital signal in plenty of time for the 10th October switchover.

Help is available from the Switchover Help Scheme for anyone who is eligible disabled, aged 75 or over, registered blind or partially sighted or anyone who has lived in a care home for six months or more

(www.helpscheme.co.uk).

There is a basic package available which costs £40, including installation and an aftercare 12 month free helpline, but it is free if you or someone you care for is eligible and also gets certain income-related benefits. Those benefits are pension credits, income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA(IR)), income support, or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance.



As part of their ongoing fundraising campaign to raise match funding for the construction of a mobile classroom for the Play group the

Derrytrasna Play Group Committee

is hosting a night of

Story Telling and Music on Saturday 25th February

9-late in The Bay Hall Social Club

Supper will be served.

Tickets £5



Produced by South Lough Neagh Regeneration Association

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