

BWRA NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALLINACURRA WESTON RESIDENTS' ALLIANCE

TIME FOR CHANGE



24th September 2012: Following four weekly protests on the Hyde Road organised by our Treasurer, Angela Collins, BWRA members protest outside City Hall against the on-going degeneration of our estate and the lack of real Community participation, alongside members of the anti-household tax campaign.

The BWRA was delighted with our success in getting the Council to demolish most of the dangerous and derelict houses, but when it comes to community involvement in the regeneration process we still have a fight on our hands.

Having demonstrated for weeks on the Hyde Road against the on-going degeneration of our estate and lack of real community participation, the BWRA took the message to City Hall with a letter for the City & County Manager, Conn Murray. We didn't get to meet Mr. Murray, but we did get to meet Director of Regeneration, Mr. Oliver O'Loughlin, who engaged with us for some time and accepted the letter on Mr. Murray's behalf. The encounter was recorded and can be viewed at www.youtube.com/RegenerationWatch

Mr. O'Loughlin's reply on behalf of Mr. Murray was less than satisfactory; it failed to mention the issues raised by the BWRA

concerning the demolition of burnt-out houses and the failed structures for community participation, there was no mention of the residents' forum, however Mr. O'Loughlin does mention that his office engages with residents through weekly clinics, yet neglects to mention where or when they are held.

Residents' are unaware of any such clinics as we have not received so much as a leaflet through our letterboxes to inform us about them. Mr. O'Loughlin also mentions that they "also hold monthly Regeneration Committee meetings and a city wide consultative forum", but does not say where or when they meet, how they were established or who sits on them.

Indeed, the letter is the same reply that Mr. O'Loughlin has sent to the numerous TD's and Senators from around the country that wrote letters in support of the BWRA. This type of response from the Office of Regeneration is unacceptable and serves to highlight the contempt that Limerick City Council has for the communities that it purports to serve.

While ghost estates are exempt from the household tax, regenerations horror estates like Ballinacurra Weston are not. If you find yourself living next a boarded-up house and you finally crack from the anti-social behaviour and sell your house back to the council for €30,000 to become a tenant elsewhere you will be made to pay the €127 household tax, you will be made pay any outstanding water rates and you will be made pay up €2,000 to board up your home when you leave. Regeneration areas should be exempt from the tax – don't register, don't pay – visit www.nohouseholdtax.org

The BWRA would like to thank Cllr. Maurice Quinlivan for participating in our 2nd protest on the Hyde Road, Cllr. Cormac Hurley and Cllr. Kieran O'Hanlon for their support, thank our TD's Willie O'Dea and Kieran O'Donnell taking the tour of our horror estate and for all the representations that they made on our behalf. Thanks to all the TD's and Senators from other constituencies that wrote letters to City Hall on our behalf. Galway's Eamon O'Cuiv TD asked a Private Members Question in Dáil Éireann: "To ask the Minister for the Environment, Community & Local Government if he has provided assistance to Limerick Regeneration conditional on local community participation by community representatives that live in the area due for regeneration and elected by the communities themselves; and if he will make a statement on the matter". A reply from Minister Jan O'Sullivan referred to the Supporting Social inclusion and Regeneration in Limerick (SSIRL) initiative.

The BWRA contacted all 166 TD's and 60 Senators individually, we also contacted all the relevant agencies and community-based service providers. While most of the Limerick based politicians and organisations ignored our e-mail we received a marvellous response from national politicians and organisations, here is a sample of the replies:

“Thanks very much for getting in touch and informing us of your Residents Association Campaign into the on-going degeneration of your estate. Really impressive, delighted to see any people anywhere getting organised, clearly it's the only way to get results, and I hope it goes well for you. The office is going to get in touch with Limerick City Council and insist that they engage with you and obviously any other pressure that we could apply we would be glad to do. So look thanks for letting us know and best of luck with the on-going Campaign. Keep us posted.”

“I wish you well; we have had many similar 'battles' for our inner city communities.”

“I have read your email and watched your videos on youtube. I commend the work that ye have done as a community. In particular in relation to coming together to make the area a better place to live. I will write to Limerick City Council on your behalf.”

“Thank you very much for your email about the Ballinacurra Weston Residents Alliance campaign. Best wishes to you for the success of your campaign and I would be happy to be kept up to date with any progress that you make.”

“I often think back warmly to my time in Ballinacurra Weston and think about the commitment and determination you all showed to claim your community back as your own. You are the real leaders in Limerick, I'm working in the UK full time now, but anything I can do to help, let me know. Best to everyone, keep on, keeping on!”

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The BWRA received an unprecedented amount of national media coverage in 2012, giving several journalists a walking tour of the area.

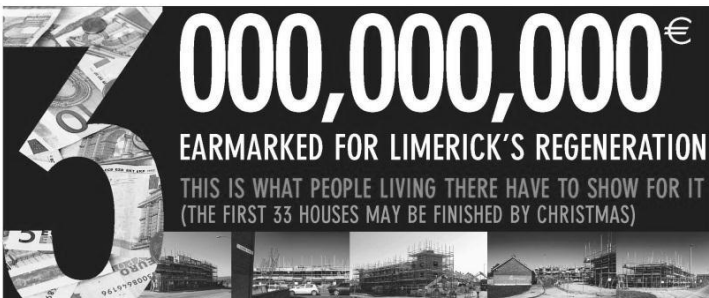
In October our issues, protests and the mismanagement of the “regeneration” project were highlighted by the *Sunday World* (above) with a two-page feature article by Frank McDonald.

In May the *Irish Daily Mail* ran a two-page feature article by Brian Carroll and in March the *Irish Examiner* (below) ran feature articles by David Young over two-weeks, which also featured *Limerick Regeneration Watch* and the *Moyross Residents' Alliance*.

We were also invited to participate in a *Primetime* special on Limerick “regeneration” for RTE and on *The Morning Show* for TV3.

With Europe
Thursday 29.03.2012

FEATURE **15**



6,000,000,000 €

EARMARKED FOR LIMERICK'S REGENERATION

THIS IS WHAT PEOPLE LIVING THERE HAVE TO SHOW FOR IT
(THE FIRST 33 HOUSES MAY BE FINISHED BY CHRISTMAS)

The across this week at Clonsilla Park where 33 houses are under construction. It was originally valued at £500,000 and is now valued at more than twice that.

(IMPERCK?) revival.
 "We is a chimera, a dream that could not be realized." Two years ago, the Johns Hopkins Report heralded a new direction for a city that had lost its way. Public and private investments were to be harnessed, and a new social vision proposed.

The new mythical figure of the Sun was pitched as the purest required to achieve the city's goals. The Sun would happen, half from the Sun, the other half from private profits. But the Sun was a projection, a promise, a magical scenario contingent on the health of the economy, and the success of Johns Hopkins in delivering innovative options to assist in the "regeneration" now.

But the Johns Hopkins are to expire on Jan. 14, and their assets are to be returned in the amalgamation of University City and County Council.

So, how far down the road has the

CATHAL MCCARTHY,
CHAIRPERSON LINERICK
REGENERATION WORKS

"Our wives have been suppressed for a long time. Silenced, ignored, not listened to," says the 60-year-old McCarthy, a married father of three and a Roanoke resident. Frustrated by the government's so-called "protection" of McMillan, he says he and his neighbors, and their Northern counterparts, established "the Citizens' Committee to End the War in Iraq" — as they involved.

McCarthy's outrage led him to write a 10-page pro-life pamphlet titled "Report on Laissez-Faire." In 2001, elderly people were "on my mind," he says. "We were being hit — people being burnt out of their homes. We were being hit by the war. We had to take over the place."

Those people started being dragged into the war, he says. "I said, 'There's no more coming out of this.' So, we started coming out as male, as a threat, just accepting our responsibility as citizens. The association, secured money from the government, and placed them in the hospital to Barack and Michelle Obama up here."

We signed off on the issue and we were not involved in the council then, believe it or not, but

“I DON'T REALLY BELIEVE THEY HAD ANY INTENTION OF HELPING US AT ALL. THEY CAME IN TO FINISH OFF THESE COMMUNITIES THAT'S HOW I FEEL, AND AFTER 5 YEARS, THAT'S BEEN DEMONSTRATED.”



David Young talks to residents in Limerick estates partly demolished after essential funds failed to materialise, and to the Rengeneration agency, which is due to disband in June

[illegible]

that was the only meeting we had in March 2008. From that point on, the owner places they're continue to engage with it, they never did."

Time flew over as the 8th grade season approached, and we got Mr. McCarty, "Dad's Kenzie" designated as 3rd Mary Park (for the Noddy) and we had a great time over two years ago. They haven't announced because people are always at that level is in a metropolitan area, the county is not a big city, it's in the far north or so in its property.

Reached up town or easily been in the city, we got a lot of people, we counted a lot of its tenants who were not in the city, but in the city, we had a lot of people in Del Norte. They just ignored us."

Instead, they ripped down perfectly good houses, he says.

Del Norte Park

PHOTO once placed in a small of the summit of Del Norte Park. The property is owned by the City Council.

As can happen anywhere property is owned by the city, it is in this neighborhood.

[illegible]

Bride Philippa: 'I've put three coats of paint on the wall in com

[illegible][illegible]

"You have to look at what the situation was in 2006 and 2007. It was like, 'With men shot, closed the areas were a close to anarchy than as you'd find anywhere in the world. I worked years in Dublin, and I'd never seen anything as bad.'

"But things have improved and a lot. A lot of the criminals have been

[illegible]

MATT COLLINS,
BALLANTYNES WENTON
RECORDS
This was a time place where
you wanted your own house
for the anti-social behavior that
had 20 years ago. Unpleasant
ment was a major factor, I got
And the drug thing. It got worse
that what really killed it was
of addiction," he says. "The
hanging didn't do for young people
It came down to such good
New 55, and a father of 5
Matt recalls how they tried to
the 1970s. "We had C2
We. We all got them and
the 1970s. "We had C2
checked a lot of the running. I
"I wasn't hearing anyone up
anything," going on old
"I wasn't alone in this
New 55, and a father of 5
he says. "It took, a dedicated
the 1970s. "We had C2
regional Record. Where places
"I was in a house that was
going up all over them. There
"I was in a house that was
were split by the police that
seems option in Seattle, was

Q_A



What are the crime rates today?

"They're comparable with any industrial or metropolitan area. The rate of the leading criminal offenses is about the same. This led us to the leading causes of the top people to allow us to do the work. The kids have made it to the top. They're not the same as the kids they did before."

Why are good houses, such as those in Longmead Park, being knocked?

"In the master plan, that part of the area, as we designed for the area, as the master plan says we need to be identified, the plan that's done, the better if you don't allow housing to people who are working less, you'll never get the better there, and if they're not

[illegible]

QA

BRENDAN KENNY

NATIONAL PUBLIC DEFENDER

[illegible]

DEVELOPMENTS

MEETING THE MINISTER

On 19th October 2012 a delegation from the BWRA met with Housing Minister, Jan O'Sullivan TD at the Mechanics Institute. The BWRA presented the Minister with a 10-page report in advance of the meeting as an aid to discussion, which included photographic evidence concerning individual situations; these were used to provide an example of the overall situation and matters concerning named residents are presented with their written consent. The plight of one family left next to a row of burnt-out houses was highlighted. Throughout the meeting the BWRA cited from reports on Limerick Regeneration to support our position on a number of issues.

Boarding-up of houses: We informed the Minister that residents' are opposed to the boarding-up of houses and want the practice stopped. Such houses are systematically looted for copper causing damage to the adjoining properties due to leaking water mains; they are often used by youths for drug parties before being eventually burnt-out, forcing more residents to leave. Residents want vacant houses refurbished.

Demolition of Houses: We informed the Minister that the demolition of houses has created new problems for residents, that we were informed that the sewage pipes have collapsed from the weight of heavy machinery and that the Council has no intention of repairing them. Many residents have complained of a smell of raw sewage in their back gardens and in some instances from their kitchen sinks. Sites are often finished roughly, but are signed-off on by Council engineers. A number of sites in the area now feature "unnatural springs" where the water mains has not been properly capped.

CCTV Cameras: There are 29 cameras in the Southside (8 in Ballinacurra Weston), which were upgraded in 2010/11 so that they could be monitored directly by the Gardaí in Henry St. This has not been done and the monitoring centre located at the LEDP is un-staffed; the cameras are fixed and motionless, recording only what they are pointed at.

Revised Plans: The Minister was surprised to learn that residents had not seen the revised plans for the area.

Local Estate Management: Membership of the CSG and local Estate Management continues to be by invitation only.

Community Participation: We explained that the current structures gave residents no real influence and that we want the Terms of Reference amended to make participation inclusive and meaningful. We questioned the need for the SSIRL report.

Human Rights Based Approach: We informed the Minister that we are working with the Community Action Network to develop a human-rights based approach to regeneration.

We also raised the issue of the household tax. The BWRA accepts that some items are outside the Ministers remit, but it is our hope that the Minister will make formal representations on our behalf to the relevant department/authority as this would add considerable weight to our own submissions.

WHAT THE REPORTS SAY

"The issue of boarding up houses in particular has very real health and safety concerns beyond the symbolic feeling of neglect and marginalisation. ... We would recommend that properties should not be left boarded up indefinitely as they are detrimentally impacting on the quality of life for the residents" (*Feeling Safe in Our Community*, 2011)

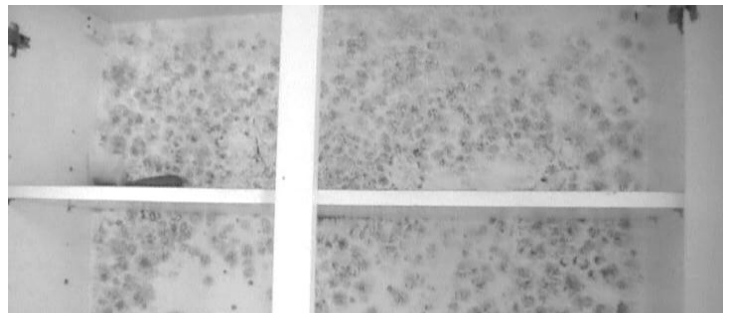
"The foundations are lacking for widespread participation in community-based initiatives, mobilising residents to act



Attending the BWRA meeting on 16th October to discuss issues to be raised and agree delegates for our meeting with Minister for Housing, Jan O'Sullivan TD.



Meeting, L-R: Martin Woodland (Vice-Chair, BWRA), Matt Collins (Chair, BWRA), Minister Jan O'Sullivan TD and Cathal McCarthy (PRO, BWRA).



ABOVE: Food cupboard of a fitted kitchen (installed last year), which is mounted on to the adjoining wall of a house in Clarina Avenue boarded-up and owned by Limerick City Council. The damp is so strong that it has penetrated the hard-board backing of the cupboard.

Penetrating damp is a common issue for residents living next to boarded-up houses. The tenants here are paying €89 per week for the privilege of living in these miserable damp conditions.

together in the wider community or common interest." (*How Are Our Kids*, 2012)

"We would recommend that any future deployment of CCTV cameras should be monitored live by the police." (*Feeling Safe in Our Community*, 2011)

"Demolition of properties with no positive plans for using the empty land may simply encourage unsafe activities that are already practised by some young people." (*Health Impact Assessment*, 2008)

THE IDEAL HOMES SHOW

The BWRA was delighted to be part of the 'Ideal Homes Show', a play performed by the Co. Limerick Youth Theatre.

"The BWRA was invited by Fiona Quin, Director of the Co. Limerick Youth Theatre, to be part of the pre-show performance. The idea is to get the audience engaged with various issues about home and peoples different experience of it" explained Matt Collins "it was an opportunity to explain to people the real implications that regeneration has on our community and our homes" said the BWRA Chairperson.

The Ideal Homes Show is a full length play written by Ciaran Fitzpatrick while he was writer in residence with Graffiti Theatre Company in Cork. It was devised by the youth theatre members that Ciaran was working with at that time and is a non-naturalistic play spanning two continents and has 38 speaking roles.

The play asks the question, 'What is Home'?' and leads us on a tour through interweaving stories: a pregnant girl travelling to England; the homeless girl she meets; her brother's unrequited love; their mother's mental illness; their father's struggle to keep them together; a family's escape from their homeland and the tortured boy they leave behind on a bus, strapped to a bomb.



Scene from *The Ideal Homes Show*; everything can be made respectable and positive with the right terminology, spin, suit and tie, including torture and "regeneration".

Following a successful run at the HoneyFitz Theatre, Lough Gur, *The Ideal Homes Show* will be performed in Limerick City at Scoil Carmel by the pupils on Thursday 13th and Friday 14th December.

The play starts at 7pm. Tickets at the door, price €5.

The Ideal Homes Show has invited ADAPT House, The Defence Forces, the Ballinacurra Weston Residents' Alliance, Doras Luimní and Hannah's Home Baking to be part of the pre-show conversation about 'home'.



BWRA information stall at the HoneyFitz Theatre (L-R): Martin Woodland (BWRA Vice-Chair), Fiona Quinn (Director, Co. Limerick Youth Theatre), Matt Collins (BWRA Chair) and Cathal McCarthy (BWRA PRO). The BWRA information stall drew a lot of attention and the audience was shocked by the true face of "regeneration" and the mostly negative impact it has had on our community. Copies of 'Residents First: towards real community participation...' were distributed.

CHRISTMAS BINGO BONANZA

JACKPOT WILL GO ON MONDAY NIGHT!



On Monday night, 17th December, Our Lady of Lourdes Community Bingo will raise the pool to €500, which must be won on the night, along with spot prizes galore.

Our Lady of Lourdes Community Bingo is celebrating its second year in existence with a Christmas Bonanza night on Monday 17th December.

The Community Bingo started in Our Lady of Lourdes at the beginning of 2011; it is held every Monday night in Our Lady of Lourdes Action Centre and has created great interest at local level. There has been a great community response with people of all age groups attending from the community.

Next Monday night they are going to have a pool of €500 which must be won on the night as well as spot prizes galore.

The project is managed by a group of strong local volunteers, including youth, who came together from a committee and set up the bingo for the benefit of the whole community.

The members of the voluntary Bingo Committee are:

Cathal McCarthy (Chairperson), Debbie Philips (Vice-Chair), Mary Timmons (Secretary), Susan Williams (Treasurer), Breda Phillips, Angela Collins, Matt Collins, Margaret Real, Shane Stewart, Ronald Collins with advice and support from Jimmy Prior (Southill FRC), Kay Flannigan (CDP) and Mags Dillion (CDP).

The Bingo Committee wishes to acknowledge the work of all the volunteers including the Ballinacurra Weston Residents Alliance who give of their free time each week to organise and run the bingo.

The Bingo Committee have also had great support from Spar Greenpark who has provided a spot prize each week.

It's been a difficult year for the Bingo Committee and at one point it was thought that the Bingo would have to close shop as a low attendance meant that it became increasingly difficult to raise the prize money to be paid out every week, because of this the prize money had to be reduced and fundraising events were organised. A Fancy Dress Ball with a sixties theme was held in November, which raised over €600, enough to cover the insurance costs.

The Bingo Committee would like to thank Mags Dillion for securing two days of bag-packing on 18th and 21st December from 9am-2pm in Tesco's Dooradoyle to raise funds. Volunteers are needed and if you'd like to give an hour or two of your time then contact Cathal: 087 784 50 70.

The Bingo Committee was disappointed with the news that our request to affiliate as a sub-committee of Our Lady of Lourdes Community Service Group (CSG) was turned down, but delighted with the news that half the proceeds from the sale of the CSG calendar will be donated to the Bingo. The Bingo Committee is hoping for a great turnout next Monday to celebrate our 2nd year anniversary of the Bingo and to enjoy the Bonanza night

Community Bingo is on Monday Night's @ 8.30pm in Our Lady of Lourdes Community Centre

The Limerick Community Law & Mediation Centre

The Limerick Community Law and Mediation Centre is a new service which is being developed for “regeneration” communities and which will provide legal advice, advocacy and representation services in all four regeneration areas. The service will also develop a mediation & conflict resolution service and a legal education service.

The Northside Community Law Centre (NCLC) in Dublin is overseeing the establishment of the Limerick Centre and appointed Caroline Keane as the Solicitor on October 22nd.

The BWRA met with Caroline in November when we hosted a meeting with other affiliates of *Limerick Regeneration Watch*; Moyross Residents’ Alliance, the Weston Gardens Residents Association and the Kincora Carew Concerned Residents, so Caroline had an opportunity to meet representatives of the independent residents’ organisations from the areas.

“I was delighted to learn that the Law Centre is finally being set up. We had been invited to the meeting in Southill in November last year by Lee-Ann Kennedy Purcell of Our Lady of Lourdes CSG where members of the NCLC explained the idea of the Law Centre to us. We heard no more about it until July when it was announced in the Limerick Leader that funding had been approved by Limerick Regeneration” said BWRA Chairperson, Matt Collins.

“When Caroline contacted us we were only too happy to help; this Law Centre is badly needed and it’s great that Limerick Regeneration is prepared to fund it” said Matt.

At the meeting, Caroline explained that the idea is to provide free legal advice on housing, social welfare, debt, employment and other areas of civil law. Seminars will be held in the communities while Caroline will also take on cases for individuals depending on the merits of the case and benefit to the community. Caroline emphasised that she reports directly to the NCLC, not Limerick Regeneration.

Caroline is currently carrying out a legal needs analysis and will be organising focus groups in all four “regeneration” areas over the coming weeks.

The purpose of the focus groups is to identify the legal needs of the regeneration communities; to assess what services exist currently to meet the needs; to identify the gaps in services; and to work in conjunction with existing community groups/ organisations/associations in rolling out the service for the community. The format of the focus group will be an informal discussion.

A focus group meeting has already taken place in Moyross and the preliminary date for the Ballinacurra Weston focus Group is January 23rd 2013 in the Community Centre and residents’ will be notified when the date is confirmed.



Solicitor Caroline Keane worked for Sweeney McGann Solicitors on O’Connell St. Limerick for 13-years where she practiced in the area of Employment and Company Law and advised on all manner of employment issues.

Caroline has extensive experience before the Employment Appeals Tribunal. Caroline further advised in all aspects of Company Compliance and specialised in compliance with Employment Legislation. An accredited Mediator, Caroline is also a Consultant in Employment Practices, Industrial Relations and Human Resource policies and practices.

Qualifications:

University of Limerick - BA (Law & European Studies)
Law Society of Ireland - Diploma in Family Law
Law Society of Ireland - Solicitor
Law Society of England & Wales – Solicitor

Activities:

Caroline is a member of Clonshire Equestrian Centre where she enjoys horse riding. Caroline has completed many half marathons both in Ireland and abroad.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY CAN

2012 marks 25 years of the Community Action Network (CAN) who were delighted to celebrate their birthday on October 25th with friends and colleagues.

The celebration brought together people who had founded CAN in 1987, groups and organisations who worked with CAN over the two and a half decades and those with whom CAN currently work.

The BWRA has been working with CAN for the past two-years; through the auspices of *Limerick Regeneration Watch* and in conjunction with affiliated organisations, the Moyross Residents' Alliance, the Weston Gardens Residents Association and the Kincora Carew Concerned Residents. We are working to develop a human-rights based approach to regeneration and we were delighted to be invited to celebrate CAN's 25th Birthday.

120 people gathered in the Mezzanine of the Hogan Suite of the Croke Park Conference Centre. The morning had contributions from a wide range of people and energies.

Pauline Faughnan,, one of CAN's founding members and Chair for nearly 10-years, presented an overview of CAN, from its founding through the development of its work, highlighting many successes and challenges along the journey.

Cecilia Forrestal, current staff member of CAN talked to those gathered about CAN today, the context within which CAN works, the model that they have developed to frame their work and their intentions into the future.

We also celebrated creatively: Brid Connolly, current member of management, wrote and read a poem for the occasion, entitled *Silver Seeds* and Peter Dorman and Gráinne Lord performed Bruce Springsteen's activist song *Keep your eyes on the prize*.

CAN's latest DVD was launched that morning. It explores the practice of leadership in community development, focusing on leadership in development, in action and in CAN as an organisation. Most of the presentations can be viewed here on CAN's website www.canaction.ie

The DVD, *The Practice of Leadership*, has been uploaded to YouTube in 3-parts, which can be viewed at www.youtube.com/CANIreland – watch out for BWRA Chairperson, Matt Collins and MRA Chairperson, Tommy Daly, participating in a CAN meeting on Housing Rights.

Fun was had in a Table Quiz and the morning finished with Birthday Cake. Many found the morning very uplifting and many there talked about the importance of celebration in these times, acknowledging that all of us do have much to celebrate.



The Community Action Network, L to R: Brid Connolly, Mary Whelan, Peter Dorman, Pauline Faughnan, Christine Murray, Jack Dunphy, Larry Tuomey, Pat Tobin, Monica Manning, Jennifer Arkins, Maura White, Cecilia Forrestal

PEOPLE POWER!





There is no doubt that the four weeks of protest in August and September were instrumental in getting the Council-owned derelict houses knocked. Behind the scenes, the BWRA lobbied our politicians and highlighted our dire situation in the national and local media; considerable pressure was brought to bear on Limerick City Council and most of the dangerous houses were demolished throughout October. However, there is little progress on the issue of real community participation; as we go to print the BWRA is still waiting for a reply from Limerick City Council to our request for copies of the Terms of Reference of the Regeneration Committee. It would seem that they didn't have any and a special meeting had to be held on December 3rd to draft them. Videos of the protests can be viewed at www.youtube.com/westonalliance and at www.youtube.com/regenerationwatch. Congratulations to all who protested – well done everyone.

TIDY TOWNS – GOING FOR GOLD



The BWRA was disappointed to be eliminated from the *Going for Gold* competition after the first round; we failed to secure enough public votes, but we were delighted with the results and the feedback from *Tidy Towns*, which was honest and constructive.

Many thought we were mad to enter *Tidy Towns*; we were invited to do so by the Council and we only decided to enter at the last minute, sending our application by 'swift post' the day before the closing date. You see, with all the burnt-out and boarded-up houses we didn't have a hope, however it was one of the few thing we were invited to participate or have a say in and we saw it as an opportunity to highlight our issues and to prove that there still is a community in Ballinacurra Weston. The judge arrived unannounced in June; several gardens have been started since then.

We entered for the designated regeneration area, which includes parts of Prospect and Rosbrien – we were recognised by *Tidy Towns* as the voice of the area. *Tidy Towns* were given before and after pictures, as well other information about the BWRA. Most areas that enter *Tidy Towns* don't have a local estate management or any of the other numerous services and resources allegedly available to our community, *Tidy Towns* acknowledged the failure of such service providers to engage with the community. The results were better than we had anticipated and hopefully the powers that be will also heed the advice of *Tidy Towns*:

"The fact that you have 50 to 60 residents turning up for volunteer days is an impressive show and clearly indicates that the community is determined to take ownership of the issues that face them."

"Ballinacurra Weston is facing serious challenges and your '*Residents First*' report makes sobering reading. *Tidy Towns* believes that constructive engagement with regional agencies should be encouraged as this can help you overcome difficult issues. "

"Your main challenge is dereliction and this is something you acknowledge throughout your application form. Who do you liaise with on addressing this issue? You have clearly identified the locations of problem properties on your map. You say you intend to begin work on painting exteriors but



Peggy Byrne was the BWRA's nominee for a *Going for Gold* Individual Merit Award for her work in organising neighbours and painting murals with local children to transform the derelict site across from her home into a community garden.

elsewhere you say you have been unable to get permission to do this. It is perhaps the biggest issue in terms of the areas appearance."

"The murals are fantastic features and are a great display of the children's talent and imagination."

"Your community 'garden of hope' is a fantastic initiative and was admired for its range of trees and shrubs. It is very well maintained and is complemented by the picnic seating and murals, which adds a human dimension... Overall the impact here is good, could it be replicated throughout the estate?"

"The raised bed with pansies is an attractive feature and well done to the boys and girls who made this happen."

"Another garden well planted with a colourful display of flowers was admired ...Yet another had a wonderful mural with butterflies..."

"You are encouraged to work with Limerick City Council and the Gardaí to combat illegal dumping."

"A number of homes were looking really well on adjudication day with well-maintained facades and manicured gardens. Number 63 and number 41 Clarina Avenue deserve special mention."

"Ballinacurra Weston faces significant challenges but the number of community gardens and attractive homes shows that community spirit is alive. Trees have the potential to further transform your neighbourhood and could be acquired at low cost from the nursery. It is hoped that your continued participation in tidy towns will help you further your aims. Best of luck!"

UNITY IN THE COMMUNITY



Despite the bad weather the BWRA managed to organise a number of community workdays. Most of our efforts were focused on maintaining and adding to our award winning Garden of Hope; cutting the grass and weeding the flower beds, the pots were re-planted and new pots and plants were added to the garden. A variety of fruit trees were planted and the walkway was properly cemented. Shrubs were planted along the side next to the path.

It was suggested that angels might look nice next to the mural of Our Lady. BWRA Tidy Towns Committee member and Resident Artist, Cindy Fogarty was happy to oblige (top right). Cindy's talent was in high demand with a request from Project Reclaim Southill to paint a mural of Our Lady on the grotto they had restored (bottom right). The BWRA was also happy to respond to a request for assistance from Moyross resident Sylvia Walsh. The BWRA supplied equipment and Cindy painted the mural (bottom left) for the Wings of Heaven Garden, which is dedicated to the memory of Moyross children that have passed on (visit facebook.com/bwraweston.limerick and facebook.com/WingsOfHeavenGardenMoyross for more pictures).

ANOTHER FINE MESS

DEPOPULATION

One of the most appalling features of Limerick's Regeneration Programme is the displacement of families. By Nov 2011, the figure had reached over 1,000. The main reason for relocating cited by those 'choosing' to leave is anti-social behaviour.

Tenants in social housing are relocated in other estates in Limerick City or county, or other counties, whereas home owners are presented with the following 'choices'.

1. Wait for their new house to be built.
2. Sell their home to the council at the 'market' rate: €30 — €80K, depending on the area.
3. Give up their home in exchange for €35K and rented accommodation elsewhere in the city.
4. In some cases, accept '*deeds for deeds*' in exchange for taking a house within the regeneration area. However, this house will not be refurbished.

IMPACT ON SCHOOLS

Corpus Christi National School — Moyross

2007: Pupils enrolled — 272

2011: Pupils enrolled — 171

Our Lady of Lourdes National School — Rosbrien

2007: Pupils enrolled — 224

2011: Pupils enrolled — 188

Southill Junior School

2007: Pupils enrolled — 71

(All walked to school)

2011: Pupils enrolled — 63

(Most are bussed in from other areas).

(figures for 2012 are currently unavailable)



One of the main traits of the characters Laurel & Hardy was their inability to make any real progress in even the simplest of endeavours. When you look at the mess that is Limerick Regeneration you would be forgiven for thinking that Stan & Ollie were in charge. The economic downturn was blamed for the lack of progress, yet €130 million of taxpayers' money was spent on "regeneration" over 5-years, over €100 million of it by Limerick City Council (LCC) on depopulation. The clowns that were running the show have returned to Dublin to well-paid jobs and LCC is now solely in charge of "regeneration" – God help us all (what's left of us)! The purpose of depopulation is to clear the land for developers and this policy has had a devastating impact on the communities'; When a house is boarded-up it is systematically looted for copper, vandalised and eventually burnt-out, forcing more residents to leave. Depopulation is to blame for the forthcoming closure of St. Endas' Secondary School. Depopulation makes a mockery of any claims that social regeneration was ever a priority.

Crecora Avenue – May 2009



Crecora Avenue – July 2012



This devastation took place from July 2011 under the watchful eye of an unmonitored CCTV camera. The last house on this block is home to a young family with two children. LCC have offered to buy-out their home for the “market rate”, which would leave them with no home and a mortgage to pay. They were also offered to become Council tenants in exchange for €30,000 “compensation”, which would leave them with rent and a mortgage to pay. A third option was to accept deeds for deeds in exchange for a smaller house in Ballinacurra Weston with no central heating, which they would have to refurbish themselves. After many representations, LCC finally agreed to demolish the adjoining property; having had their home fill with smoke before the family were living in fear of a fire spreading to their home.

December 2012



COUNCIL BURIES COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION REPORT

A Report entitled “Viable Management Structures for Housing Estates in Regeneration Areas: Options for Community Based Structures to facilitate enhanced community participation, involvement and partnership with statutory organisations” is gathering dust in City Hall for the past year waiting to be signed off on.

The Report was commissioned by the Regeneration Agency in 2011 and the research was conducted by Brian Dillon of *Nexus*. The report gives a critical analysis of the current structures for community involvement in the regeneration process and local Estate Management, highlighting their many failings and making recommendations to make them inclusive and meaningful.

“I am now even more convinced that the Councils excuse that they have to wait for the SSIRL report before they can change the structures for community participation is little more than a stalling tactic” said BWRA PRO, Cathal McCarthy “there is no reason why the *Nexus* Report couldn’t be implemented while we await the SSIRL Report, which could take over a year to complete” said Cathal.

The position of the BWRA regarding our involvement in the current structures is as follows:

Director of Housing & Regeneration, Mr. Oliver O’Loughlin wants the BWRA to write to him and ask to join the residents’ forum. The BWRA will not be doing this; we were formed following the collapse of the forum and we have no desire to return to what was little more than a talking shop designed to distract and silence the views of residents. Indeed, we feel that we have had more influence on events since our formation in 2010 than we did during the 3-years we spent “participating” on the forum. Mr. O’Loughlin can write to us regarding our involvement and include the Terms of Reference for the residents’ forum and regeneration committee with his correspondence, which we will then consider before making an informed decision.

COUNCIL WILL USE CPO’S

In October the BWRA was represented at the *Transforming Local Government and Local Democracy in Ireland Symposium*. During his keynote address, Limerick City and County Manager Conn Murray said he is prepared to use Compulsory Purchase Orders to “progress regeneration”.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Article 40.3.2°: “The State shall, in particular, by its laws protect as best it may from unjust attack and, in the case of injustice done, vindicate the life, person, good name, and property rights of every citizen.” - Constitution of Ireland

Many people living in some of our estates are not adequately protected by the State and are living in fear. This is especially true in regeneration areas.

The dedicated Garda service promised for regeneration areas in the *Fitzgerald Report* never happened and far from restoring “confidence and stability in the communities” a culture of fear still exists and many vulnerable people feel that they have no choice but to leave.

In truth, there was little debate about what is best for regeneration areas and many residents have already been blackguarded; with many homeowners turned back into tenants by Limerick City Council. Nevertheless, residents must be given the following options in any demolition scheme agreed:

If you are a Limerick City Council tenant:

As a tenant you have legal rights and must be offered a new home in the area or a home in another location acceptable to you, under the same terms of tenancy. You should also be compensated for any improvements you have made to your home during your tenancy; ‘like for like’.

If this involves temporary displacement, you must conclude a legal agreement with Limerick City Council assuring you of a home in the area within an acceptable and reasonable time, if this is your wish.

If you are a home owner:

You must be offered a home in the area exchange for your existing house. Your new home should be at least the same size, if not bigger than your existing home, and should be built on the same area of land. For example: If your existing home stands on a quarter acre of land, then your new home should be built on a quarter acre of land; ‘like for like’.

You may be required or decide to relocate, if so, you must be given the means to secure a new home by Limerick City Council by purchasing your home at a value that reflects the value of a new house within the redeveloped area or by purchasing a house on your behalf in exchange for the deeds of your home. Deeds for deeds.

Do not entertain any proposal involving “existing market rates”.

Threats of compulsory purchase should be ignored, you are still entitled to ‘like for like’.

Do not be bullied into making a hasty decision.

All offers must be made in writing, which should be approved by your solicitor before you agree to the terms. Don’t sign anything without consulting your solicitor.

Remember demand ‘like for like & deeds for deeds’ - it is your right

123 DISCRIMINATION

Limerick Regeneration’s contention that the regeneration areas have now been stabilised and are in a much better place than they were in 2007 is a view that is not shared by online insurance company 123.ie

If you live in Ballinacurra Weston, St. Mary’s Park, Southill or Moyross and look for a quote online for house insurance then you will receive the following message:

“Sorry !

We are unable to quote in this case...

Based on the information you have provided about your property, your risk is outside our acceptance criteria

Please note that failure to have property insurance in place could lead to a breach of the terms and conditions attaching to any loan secured on that property.”

If you enter in the same information but change the address to a non-regeneration area you will receive a quote.

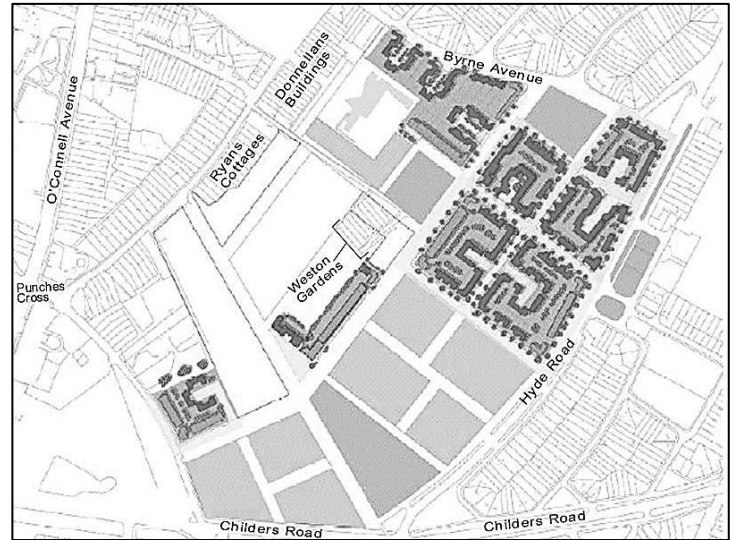
SO WHAT'S THE PLAN?



Director of Regeneration, Oliver O'Loughlin has stated the regeneration of Ballinacurra Weston will involve extensive refurbishment of the area. Homeowners may be eligible for external refurbishment (windows, doors and walls) if it's deemed necessary and Council tenants will be eligible for external and internal refurbishment.

The BWRA has been reliably informed that the revised plans for all four regeneration areas are currently being reviewed by the National Crime Prevention Unit (NCPU) to make recommendations on '*designing out*' anti-social behaviour.

We have also been informed that the new plan for Ballinacurra Weston is the least developed of the four areas, that it is merely an aerial photograph showing which houses the Council want to demolish.



The map on the left shows the designated regeneration area of Ballinacurra Weston (parts of), which was red-lined in 2008 to define the legal remit of the now defunct Southside Regeneration Agency; it partitioned the area and includes parts of Weston, Prospect and Rosbrien.

The map on the right shows the roads and block layout in the shelved 2008 plan, which proposed 5-storey apartments and duplexes.

While these maps are no longer relevant, the BWRA is concerned that Limerick City Council intends to run a road through the area and that threats of Compulsory Purchase Orders will be used to bully homeowners into accepting whatever they are offered.

Both home-owners and tenants have legal rights and residents are advised to consult a solicitor if they are made an offer by the Council.



COMMUNITY INFORMATION DAY

The BWRA was one of the 23 community-based organisations that participated in the community information day, which was held in the West End Youth Centre on Thursday the 30th of August from 10am – 2pm.

The event was organised by Our Lady of Lourdes Community Service Group Ltd. (CSG) and the BWRA was invited to take a table and display information about our group. When the BWRA accepted the invitation we were informed the event was part of the *Pride of Place* competition, which the BWRA had withdrawn from.

“Basically, we decided to withdraw from *Pride of Place* because of the CSG’s selective inclusion policy; membership of their Board of Directors and Local Estate Management is by invitation only. There were a number of other issues that we weren’t happy about, like Estate Managements refusal to use the ride-on lawnmower for green sites in our area during *Tidy Towns*” said BWRA Chair, Matt Collins.

Nevertheless, the BWRA pointed out that there was no mention of *Pride of Place* in the invitation or on the application form and that the idea of a Community Information Day had been proposed long before the parish was invited by Limerick City Council to enter *Pride of Place*. Our point was taken.

Despite our withdrawal from *Pride of Place* we got to speak with the judges and inform them of the work we do; our display consisted of pictures of our Garden of Hope and other projects the BWRA were involved in.

“It was just as well we were there as the Garden of Hope had been entered in the competition behind our backs and we were able to tell the judges the real story” said BWRA PRO, Cathal McCarthy. “The event had not been advertised so hardly any members of the community attended, the whole thing was just for show to impress the judges, not inform the community” said Cathal.



Matt Collins and Steven Corbett man the BWRA stall



The Ballinacurra Weston Residents’ Alliance
wishes all our members and supporters
A Happy Christmas & A Peaceful New Year
nollaig faoi shéan is faoi mhaise

Ballinacurra Weston Residents Alliance

NAME: _____

Address: _____

Tel: _____ E-mail: _____

I would like to participate on the committee (please tick) Yes ☐ No ☐