

REGENERATION: HUMAN RIGHTS BASED CAMPAIGN UNDERWAY



Limerick Delegates: Some of the Limerick delegates attending the *Tenants First* meeting in Liberty Hall, Dublin, on Tuesday 15th May were (from left to right) Ronald Collins, Debbie Philips, Cathal McCarthy (back), Stephen Corbett, Matt Collins, Tommy Daly and Ailish O'Connell.

OVER a hundred delegates representing Limerick and Dublin regeneration areas have attended a meeting to start a human rights campaign.

The meeting, held in Liberty Hall, Dublin on 15th May, provided an opportunity for regeneration area residents to share their experience of conditions before, during and after regeneration and allowed residents to learn from each other about what is really happening on the ground in the different estates.

The meeting was organised by the Dublin based *Tenants First* and facilitated by the *Community Action Network* (CAN). All four Limerick regeneration areas were represented and the evidence gathered will form the basis of a human rights campaign.

Pat Begley, Chairperson of the Carew / Kincora Concerned Residents said he was impressed by the turnout, "It was great to meet with the Dublin residents and learn that we had similar experiences"

"I was very impressed with the support that Dublin residents had from their community workers, it's a different story in Limerick".

Tommy Daly, Chairperson of the Moyross Residents' Alliance said that he found it an emotional experience, "I found it heart breaking listening to some of the stories, the way residents were blackguarded so the Council could grab the land for the developers. I am very angry about the way we are been treated in Limerick".

Chairperson of the Ballinacurra Weston Residents Alliance, Matt Collins, said that the situation in Limerick cannot be allowed to continue, "Our human rights are being trampled on and it has to

stop. We had fewer problems five years ago; regeneration has destroyed our communities with depopulation and the boarding-up of homes".

"The Council knows well that when they board up a house it is systematically looted for copper, vandalised, used for drug parties and eventually burnt out.

Cathal McCarthy of Limerick Regeneration Watch said that regeneration is being carried out much differently 60 miles away in Tralee; "if you're a homeowner and they want to knock your home they ask you first, if you agree they move you into rented accommodation and they pay the rent for you. When your new house is built they move you back in as a homeowner. It's not done house by house, but block by block, so if most people in the block don't want to be knocked they have the refurbishment option".

"I would like to thank CAN for sponsoring the bus for Limerick delegates" said Mr. McCarthy, "and in particular I would like to thank Dr. John Bissett of *Tenants First* and Cecilia Forrester of CAN for travelling to Limerick last week with award winning film maker, Donnacha O'Brian to begin the process of collecting residents testimonies, it was a busy couple of days but we made a good start to our human rights campaign. "

The meeting was also attended by sociologists from the University of Limerick; Department head, Dr. Eoin Devereux, Dr. Martin Power and Dr. Cliona Barnes. The Power / Barnes report, "Feeling Safe in Our Community", was submitted by the Limerick delegates along with other reports on regeneration areas as part of their evidence.

Bye-bye Bren Hello Ollie



JOINT STATEMENT FROM COMMUNITY GROUPS

TOMORROW, Thursday 14th June 2012, will mark the closure of the Limerick Regeneration Agencies (LRA) as the Ministerial Orders which established them 5-years ago will not be renewed.

Brendan Kenny, CEO of the LRA, will return to his job as Assistant Dublin City Manager with very little to boast about his time spent in Limerick. Mr. Kenny has admitted that many areas are now worse off now than they were when he came to town 5-years ago.

In fairness to Mr. Kenny, the Agencies were given very little powers by the legislation put in place and much of the blame for the deterioration of the estates lies with the Housing Department of Limerick City Council.

Most of our problems are social ones, but as depopulation and demolition was progressed and homes were boarded-up, new problems began to emerge.

Penetrating damp, leaking water mains, collapsed sewage pipes, illegal dumping, junkies and rats become the new neighbours, encouraging more people to leave.

However, there was much that Mr. Kenny could have done with the limited powers at his disposal when it came to community participation and involvement.

The Residents Forums, established by Mr. Kenny through local Estate Management and the CDP's, were little more than talking shops that were ultimately used to stifle the voice of residents.

After 5-years you would expect that residents would have been empowered to the point that we were running local estate management. Instead these continue to be run by non-resident paid community workers, who were given the title of "community representatives" by Mr. Kenny. These people did not represent us.

"So long Ollie, here's another fine mess I won't be taking responsibility for"

Limerick City Council will now have sole responsibility for the Limerick Regeneration Programme which will be overseen by the newly appointed Director of Regeneration, Ollie O'Loughlin.

We can only hope that the state-sponsored land grab of the last 5-years is over and that we will be treated with dignity and respect. Time will tell, we live in hope.

Cathal McCarthy
(Limerick Regeneration Watch)
Tommy Daly
(Moyross Residents Alliance)
Matt Collins
(Ballinacurra Weston Residents Alliance)
Pat Begley
(Carew/Kincora Concerned Residents)

BWRA going for gold – MRA put on hold



The Ballinacurra Weston Garden of Hope was established by the BWRA in 2011 and took first prize in the Limerick Community Challenge for Environmental Grants recipients. This year the BWRA have entered *Tidy Towns* and will be *Going for Gold*.

The Ballinacurra Weston Residents Alliance (BWRA) have entered Tidy Towns 2012.

"We have a lot of derelict sites left by the so-called regeneration and we intend to take ownership of them and transform them into community amenities and gardens" said Matt Collins

"We had hoped to avail of the services of local estate management and make use of their ride-on lawn mower but we were refused because of alleged insurance issues. Of course they are competing against us in *Tidy Towns*, working in estates outside the designated regeneration area" said Mr. Collins



ABOVE: Before and after pictures of the MRA St. Francis Community garden in Delmege Park, Moyross

Meanwhile, on the Northside, Tommy Daly expressed his disappointment that the Moyross Residents Alliance application for *Tidy Towns* had gone for adjudication. "The Moyross Residents Forum Ltd have also entered, but they don't represent us. I'd like to see proper elections held for their board of directors"