

DUBLIN 15 COMMUNITY COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE POBAIL, BAILE ATHA CLIATH 15
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Representing: Blanchardstown-Castleknock-Clonsilla-Mulhuddart

Annual report 2006

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1.0 General introduction

The Dublin 15 Community Council was formed 15 years ago (merging the Castleknock & Blanchardstown community councils which date from the early 1970's) to provide an umbrella organisation for the many residents and voluntary community groups in the Dublin 15 area.

We are a committee of people from all areas of Dublin 15 all working voluntarily towards a common aim of lobbying for improved facilities for the residents of Dublin 15

1.1 Aims & objectives:

Our main objective is to develop the consensus views of the Dublin 15 community in matters relating to, Public Transport, Environment, Education, Crime Prevention, Job Creation, Planning and Development, Recreational Facilities, Infrastructure and Tourist facilities. Having developed the consensus make representation to State and other Statutory Bodies.

1.2 Support offered to Members:

The Dublin 15 Community Council welcomes all voluntary groups in the Dublin 15 postal district and provides an environment where all voluntary groups can help each other to make the Dublin 15 area a great place to live in by ensuring adequate transport, educational, recreational and sporting infrastructure keeps pace with the growth of Dublin 15.

1.3 The value & benefit of membership:

The Community Council is represented on the Blanchardstown Area Partnership, Chamber of Commerce, Fingal Tourism Initiative, Liffey Valley Advisory Committee, Forum 15, and Fingal Community Forum. This provides influence and ensures the representatives on these bodies have a strong feedback mechanism.

Residents Associations and Community groups focus on their own specific areas but often feel powerless to influence the big issues like transport, educational, recreational & sporting infrastructure or crime prevention. The Community Council provides a forum to discuss these issues and potential solutions. The Community Council also provides the forum for members to learn from the experience of others in tackling issues that affect Residents Associations and Community groups.

1.4 Web Site

"The Dublin 15 Community Council has a web site: www.dublin15cc.com. There we publish the submissions we have made to the appropriate planning and regulatory authorities."

1.5 Committee

Each affiliated community group is entitled to send 1 representative to the monthly committee meetings. The committee met 11 times this year, generally on the second Tuesday of each month. We initiated the formation of our Sub-committees, each dealing with a specific topic and reporting back to the executive at our monthly meetings.

2.0 Planning & Development

Dublin 15 has grown at a very fast rate from 40,000 to 92,000 between 1990 and present.

2002 census data

- The Dublin 15 area has grown rapidly from 53,221 in 1996 to 69,566 (census figures) an increase of 31%.
- Within Dublin 15 some areas have increased by 60%.

2006 preliminary census data

- The Dublin 15 area has grown rapidly from 69,566 in 2002 to 90,952 (prelim census figures) an increase of 20%. (cumulative 70% from '96 to '06)
- The Castleknock area has grown from 19,373 ('02) to 21,504 an increase of 11%. (cumulative 35% from '96 to '06)

The land in Dublin 15 was originally designated for a population of 100,000 people, with the current residential density guidelines; this is likely to reach 120,000 without any additional land zoned for residential use. The infrastructure has lagged development, Roads are saturated with private transport with congestion and no capacity to deal with planned increases in peak time commuting, the # 39 QBC is the worst performing route in QBC network (due to congestion and very limited bus lanes), no new bus routes, with very little improvement in rail service, no new secondary schools in last 10 years, and a crisis in primary education (example Castaheany Educate Together).

The existing situation will get worse with planning permission granted for very large scale developments in vicinity of rail stations (Pellettstown near Ashtown in the Dublin City Council area, Phoenix Park racecourse site with a new rail station near Auburn Ave, Castlethorn's developments in Porterstown & Diswellstown with a new rail station between Coolmine & Clonsilla and the Hansfield SDZ with limited access to Clonsilla rail station. This development combined with the existing gross overcrowding on the Maynooth rail line **is leading to unsustainable development and misery for Dublin 15 residents.**

2.1 Hansfield SDZ Appeal

Special development zones (SDZs) were introduced in the 2000 Planning Act for sites where development was deemed by the Government to be of such strategic economic or social importance that it could bypass the normal planning process.

The intention was that this would enable greenfield industrial sites to be handed over, in "ready-to-go" fashion, to significant inward investors. Curiously, it has never been used for this purpose; the three SDZs proposed so far all involve housing sites.

One of the 3 SDZ's was proposed for Hansfield, this is an 82-hectare site with a projected population of 7,000 people, opening on to the Ongar Road, with St Joseph's Hospital to the east and the boundary with county Meath to the west.

The purpose of an SDZ was to give developers greater certainty in terms of securing planning permission and also shorten the time-scale involved in progressing major schemes. A key factor was that it cut out third-party appeals once the master plan was adopted.

When the Hansfield SDZ was adopted in 2003 the community council was concerned that the SDZ would just add to the transport problems:

- It was based on a future rail line to Navan, which had no government approval, no funding allocated and no published timeline for construction or operation.
- No timelines or routes existed for a new QBC bus network to serve Hansfield.

In addition there were major problems with the design

- Public open space was beside the river Liffey between Lucan and Lexlip.
- 110kV line & pylons ran across the site

The community council appealed the SDZ to An Bord Pleanála to link infrastructure with new houses in August 2003. The land owners Menolly Homes and Manor Park Homes also appealed the SDZ to An Bord Pleanála arguing that there was no need to provide reserved sites for a post primary school.

An Bord Pleanála conducted a 3 day oral hearing in 2003, where the community council were able to cross examine Fingal county council, Dublin Bus and Irish Rail on their plans for the Hansfield area. It became obvious at the hearing that there were no transport plans just a series of aspirations. The Department of Education were also present and outlined their needs for 2 primary schools and 1 post primary school site.

In November 2003 An Bord Pleanála requested Fingal County Council to amend the SDZ to "outline a clear phasing program for the development of the site so as to provide the timely delivery of rail transport, bus transport, roads, schools, community facilities and major open spaces in conjunction with the development of housing"

Fingal County Council put the new SDZ plan on display early in 2005, however the Public open space was still beside the river Liffey between Lucan and Lexlip and the 110kV line & pylons still ran across the site. Our local councillors ensured that amendments were made to address these and other issues.

In the meantime Menolly Homes and Manor Park Homes sought permission through the normal planning channels for a 920-home residential scheme at Hansfield but this was rejected by both Fingal County Council and An Bord Pleanála.

The second oral hearing took place in November 2005 over 2 days, where Dublin Bus, Irish Rail, the ESB and the Department of Education presented their plans and were cross examined by the community council and consultants for the landowners.

The Transport 21 plan was announced a few weeks before the oral hearing, which contained a new rail spur to Hansfield and Dunboyne. The landowners Menolly Homes and Manor Park Homes withdrew their objections to the school sites but opposed the amendments our local councillors adopted.

An Bord Pleanála granted permission for the Hansfield SDZ in January 2006 with the following changes:

No more than 1,000 units occupied without:

- The permanent construction of the first primary school with a minimum of 8 number classrooms of permanent construction.

No more than 2,000 units occupied without:

- Construction of a second Primary School and Post Primary School each with a minimum of 8 number classrooms of permanent construction,
- The provision of a community centre”.
- The provision of a 15-minute train service at Hansfield Station (4 per hr) and a 7.5 minute train service at Clonsilla Station (8 per hr) during the peak hours, each train with a capacity of 1,250 passengers.

Unfortunately An Bord Pleanála deleted most of the amendments our local councillors adopted.

The community council welcome this decision as a landmark decision which will ensure that the growth of Dublin 15 will be constrained by the timely delivery of schools, community facilities and transport infrastructure.

The community council would like to acknowledge the help of all the current Castleknock and Mulhuddart area councillors and co appellants Joan Burton TD and Senator Tom Morrissey in our campaign

2.2 Submission - Local Area Plan for Hollywoodrath.

Fingal County Council put the draft Local Area Plan for Lands at Hollywoodrath, Dublin 15 on display.

We raised the issue of the shortage of primary and secondary school places in the areas that need them, poor / non existent access to public transport and a severe deficit with regard to cultural, recreational/ leisure facilities

Our research has shown that the provision of new schools both primary and secondary has failed to keep pace with the growth in population, we believe that the provision of primary and secondary education needs to be provided within the Dublin 15 area, as commuting out of the area Dublin 15 for school places is not sustainable. The geography is further complicated by the fact that internal road linkages within the Dublin 15 area are very poor, necessitating an even distribution of schools within the area

When the LAP was debated by Fingal County Council, the councilors voted to amend proposal to locate a primary school site on these lands.

2.3 Submission on lands at Barnhill, Dublin 15, before the Draft Local Area Plan is prepared.

The community council raised the following issues:

- ❑ Needs to integrate with the Hansfield SDZ and ensure that no development shall take place on these lands until the entire infrastructure required for Phase 3 of the Hansfield SDZ.
- ❑ Transportation for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles.
- ❑ Environmental and infrastructural Services
- ❑ Provision of local community and educational facilities,
 - At a density of 20 housing units / acre, population would require 678 primary school places and 510 post primary school places.
 - If the density was to increase this would drive a need for more school places.
- ❑ Provision of open space and recreational amenities
- ❑ Provision of children's play areas.

We hope that these issues are taken into consideration in preparing the draft LAP and will continue to pursue them when the draft LAP is published for public comment.

2.4 Bohemian's stadium

Development company (Andorey) proposed to build a new 10,000 seat football stadium in Diswellstown Castleknock for Bohemians Football Club in exchange for Dalymount.

The road infrastructure on the Luttrellstown road at this point is exceptionally poor with very little road signage, car parking and no foot paths so not only is it difficult for cars, it is extremely dangerous for pedestrians. Public transport is non-existent on this road, while the only other public transport available in the area is the train to Coolmine railway station, about 15-20 minutes walk away and the 37 bus which passes through Carpenterstown and Luttrellstown. This implies that many fans would travel to the grounds by car, however with only 250 car parking spaces residents want to know what will happen to overspill traffic on big match days.

Our opposition to a large stadium at Diswellstown was based on the lack of a credible transport plan. We lobbied public representatives and attended public meetings to voice our concerns.

We were fortunate that Bohemian's Football Club obtained a better price from property developer Liam Carroll for €65 million, this site is in Harristown near Dublin airport. The deal is worth €40 million in cash, the remainder is tied up in the 10,000-seat stadium which will be built for the club on a 6.5 acre site located off the M50, close to Ballymun.

2.5 Observations on the proposed land swap at Barberstown with Shackleton Gardens, Beechpark (Ref No F06A/1367)

The developer proposes swapping the 6.8 acre Class 1 public open space at Barberstown, for a smaller quantity of lands (4.2 acre) known as the Shackleton Gardens, Beechpark, Clonsilla.

The open space at Barberstown, Clonsilla is ideally sited to service both the Hansfield SDZ lands and the Barnhill lands. This Class 1 public open space was conditioned as part of Phibblestown, Ravenswood, Stonebridge Estate and Allendale residential developments.

One of the deficiencies of the Hansfield SDZ was that the Class 1 public open space will be provided at St Catherine's which is a considerable distance from these lands.

Integrating the Barnhill LAP with the previously conditioned Class 1 public open space offers the opportunity to enhance the urban environment and provide local access to a desperately needed playing fields and active recreational amenity accessible to the people who will live in both Barnhill and Hansfield.

In submitting a valid observation, the Community Council is positioned to appeal any unfair land swap to An Bord Pleanála.

3.0 Roads

3.1 Traffic Study of the Phoenix Park Submission

Our submission to the OPW's consultants deals with:

- The growth of Dublin 15, current and future projected commuting patterns, road safety issues and traffic management proposals.
- Potential for public transport and road safety improvements.

We requested that they permit some of the Dublin Bus routes # 37, 38 & 39 use the Phoenix Park to improve peak journey time for residents of Dublin 15.

We also lobbied to ensure that through traffic from Dublin 15 via the main Chesterfield Avenue be maintained without additional restrictions.

We were successful in retaining through traffic from Dublin 15 via the main Chesterfield Avenue with no additional constraints (other than a 30kph speed limit between the Zoo and Parkgate St gates). While we were unsuccessful in lobbying for a QBC through the park the report recommends some #37 Bus routes along Chesterfield Avenue.

3.2 Dublin City Council's proposals for Chapelizod

Roads are an important element of our infrastructure and we monitor the planning, building and upgrade of the regions roads to ensure that we have an adequate hierarchy of roads to meet the demands of the various users in this area.

We made a number of strong representations to both Fingal and Dublin City Council regarding the City Council's recent proposal regarding the traffic problems of Chapelizod village. There has been a study published for the Dublin City Council, which amongst its recommendations is a number which would effectively mean the closing of Chapelizod to through traffic from Dublin 15.

Following an unprecedented number of submissions Dublin City Council appear to have abandoned plans to close Chapelizod to through traffic from Dublin 15.

4.0 Infrastructure

Dublin 15 has grown rapidly from a population of 53,221 in 1996 to an estimated population of 92,000 in 2006. The pattern of development has been houses and apartments with little in the way of infrastructure. The shops and crèches always seem to be in the last phase of any large development (if at all) and it takes a very long time for buses and schools to appear in new areas.

It's true that we have eventually got new schools, extra trains, the Blanchardstown bypass, and at last the new Ongar Road to somewhat relieve our congested roads. But it still takes longer to get into Dublin city centre by bus or car, and the extra train spaces soon fill up to capacity before the trains leave Dublin 15 and it appears that we never really catch up.

4.1 Infrastructure - Education

The Dublin 15 population has rapidly grown from a population of 40,000 in 1990 to in excess of 95,000 today. The last new Post primary schools to be built in Dublin 15 were Huntstown and Castleknock community colleges in 1995. Since that time the area has rapidly expanded and the community council became concerned that the educational infrastructure was not keeping pace with development.

The community council initiated a survey of all schools in the Dublin 15 area in 2003, the results showed that there were 8,294 pupils in primary schools and 4892 pupils in post primary schools. They also showed that the established primary schools were full and 3 new primary schools were established to cater with the booming population of children entering the primary school cycle, this has since increased to 5 new schools.

Dublin 15 Community Council welcomes the announcement in November 2006 by the Minister for Education and Science Mary Hanafin of 2 new primary schools and the extension 2 of primary schools in Dublin 15.

- The 2 new schools are St. Benedict's Ongar and Phibblestown NS.
- While St. Mochta Clonsilla and St Patricks Junior and Senior Schools, Corduff are to be extended.

The community council congratulate the boards of managements, staff and parents in obtaining approval to provide these additional school places in Castaheany/ Ongar, Clonsilla and Corduff.

Demand for school places have grown rapidly with Junior infant enrolments increasing by 50% between 2000 and 2005. Many schools expanded and new primary schools were established in Littlepace, Castaheany, Tyrrelstown, Castleknock and Diswellstown.

This huge increase in primary school student numbers will create demand for additional school places at second level.

In November 2005 the Department of Education's evidence to the oral hearing of the Hansfield SDZ appeal stated that *"Late in 2004 School Planning Section carried out a study on future school requirements in the Dublin 15 area. This study identified the need for four new 24 classroom schools or provision to provide 96 new classes in total at primary level. At post primary level a need was identified for an **additional three new post primary schools** or provision to provide **circa 4000 new places** at post primary level. This study was based on housing developments since 2002 and took account of additional units constructed as well as those under construction and those with outstanding planning permissions. The study did not take account of developments for which planning permission has not been granted and therefore did not include the Hansfield SDZ."*

The population growth has occurred throughout Dublin 15, with large increases in the Littlepace – Ongar – Hansfield and the Diswellstown areas. This has caused a considerable strain on the educational infrastructure, with clear signs that there are not enough post primary school places.

1 new post primary school was approved in 2004 and the site in Phiblestown appears to be in the final stages of agreement between the Dept of Education and Mennolly Homes.

A second new post primary school is conditioned as part of the Hansfield SDZ (see section above)

On the other hand the Diswellstown - Castleknock area remains without a clear plan to accommodate the growth in demand. The population increase has naturally resulted in increasing demands for school places with new primary schools established recently:

- ◆ St Patrick's NS (3 to 4 class per year with pupils entering post primary from 2009)
- ◆ Castleknock Educate Together (currently in start up, with 1 class per year and 2 class per year (60 pupils) entering post primary from 2007).
- ◆ Existing primary schools expanding by increasing the numbers of classes per year.

Currently there are ~ 1,100 students in Castleknock Community College, as children graduate from the new primary schools this will result in demand exceeded supply. Having discussed the issue, local residents, parents and teachers are opposed to increasing school size beyond the current capacity. Indeed it is felt by some that the school is already too large at 1,100 and operating beyond it's optimum pupil numbers

The community council responded to the emerging crisis by establishing a forum and facilitating a meeting between the parents associations of all primary schools in the Castleknock Community College catchment area. This Education Forum has had a series of meetings to build a consensus and agree a model of second post primary school that reflects the diversity of primary level schools in the area as well as the local population. These meetings took place between June 2005 and January 2006.

Having developed that consensus the proposal was presented to all primary school's Board of Management in the current catchment's area of Castleknock Community College. We received a very positive response from all the primary school BOM's and letters of support for the proposed model. The proposal was presented to the Department of Education and Science in October 2006 and is under "active consideration".

The Minister for Education and Science Mary Hanafin said on 8 November 2006 that she would shortly be announcing the go-ahead for a second bundle of projects under the Public Private Partnership (PPP) process, and that it also her intention to announce additional major capital school projects early in the new year.

The community council hopes that the minister will include some post primary schools for Dublin 15 in the new year announcement.

4.2 Infrastructure - Recreational facilities

The infrastructure gaps have occurred in Dublin 15 over the last 20 years as a result of the rapid development of the Greater Blanchardstown Area, where the provision of community centres and sporting facilities has not kept pace with the development of new residential areas.

4.2.1 Sporting infrastructure deficit in Dublin 15 area.

The Fingal Sports Strategy 2003-2007 published by the Fingal Sports Partnership (Fingal County Council, the County Dublin VEC and the Campus Stadium Ireland).

The report states (page 10):

“The largest single issue highlighted by sports clubs across Fingal was the access to, availability of, or the complete lack of facilities available to them to provide for their sport. The range of difficulties relating to facilities and grounds varied from security and safety of premises to lack of changing facilities or parking to unavailability of the desired facilities at appropriate times.

The situation relating to facilities is outlined in greater detail by the Collier & Broderick study.

In some parts of the county there are proportionately less facilities per capita (this will be exacerbated by projected population growth) than in older longer established communities. This is the case in many parts of Dublin 15. While particular attention needs to be directed at these areas there are also needs in all of the areas across the county. The Collier & Broderick (p.21, 2002) study illustrates that 3 areas (Blanchardstown, Castleknock and Swords) with the greatest growth in population between 1996 and 2002 are now the most deprived in terms of facilities compared with other parts of the county.”

Chapter 3 page 17 *“In Dublin 15 (greater Blanchardstown and Castleknock) which has 75,000 people and is expected to grow to 100,000 by the end of the decade there very few sports clubs proportionally when compared to the rest of the county. Map 1 illustrates this as there is a higher proportion of sports clubs with their own facilities along the coastal areas and in Swords.*

In addressing the disadvantage experienced by Dublin 15 and Swords area, we believe that the funding should be targeted at these areas. When we talk of disadvantaged areas, the Castleknock, Castaheany and Swords areas are not areas that are associated with disadvantage. In the past clubs in similar areas would have fundraised to acquire playing fields, facilities etc

The issue that make it very difficult for sporting organizations on their own to provide facilities is the cost of acquiring lands. The situation arises due to speculative pressure on land in proximity to residentially zoned land in the Dublin 15 area which has made it virtually impossible for clubs to purchase their own lands.

In addressing the disadvantage detailed in “Fingal Sports Strategy 2003-2007“ experienced by Dublin 15 and Swords area, we believe that the majority of the funding should be focused in these two areas rather than evenly distributed across the county.

4.2.2 Land usage in Dublin 15

The Dublin 15 area is the largest conurbation in Fingal County. It is a satellite town within the Dublin Metropolitan Area, separated by strategic green belts from Finglas to the East (Scribblestown & Dunsink), Phoenix Park to the South East and from Lucan to the South (Liffey valley).

Playing fields are either in private ownership (i.e. the Garda sports grounds in Westmanstown) or in public ownership in lands that are transferred to Fingal County Council as a result of Class 1 public open space contributions as a result of residential development.

The rapid increase in the value of land in the Dublin area, and the changes in land zoning in the Dublin 15 area in the last 20 years have made it impossible for clubs to purchase land. This means that new clubs are solely reliant on Class 1 Public open space for playing facilities.

Dublin 15 Community Council has lobbied consistently over the years for the protection of the Green Belts surrounding the Greater Blanchardstown area. The location of sporting facilities within the green belt lands is viewed as an acceptable and sustainable land use for this zoning.

If we are to address the disadvantage experienced by residents in Dublin 15 as detailed in the “Fingal Sports Strategy 2003-2007”, additional sports facilities need to be provided in the green belt lands adjacent and accessible from residential areas.

4.2.3 Recent developments that address recreational disadvantage

The provision of community facilities is being imaginatively addressed by Fingal County Council in combining the design of new schools with community centres where the facility is planned to be available to the wider community in the evenings.

This year 2 community centers opened in Castaheany and Diswellstown. (Mary Mother of Hope – Littlepace and St Patrick’s - Diswellstown). This is a welcome development.

Application by Castleknock Hurling & Football club for new grounds.

The difficulty faced by clubs trying to provide access to sport in the newly developing areas is illustrated by the Castleknock Hurling & Football Club. The club was established in 1998 and has approximately 800 members; it has 1 Senior & 1 Juvenile pitch and a co-share arrangement of an adjacent pitch at Porterstown Park.

The development potential of the club to support its catchment area (the general area bounded by the Clonsilla Road, Coolmine Road, Roselawn Road, Porterstown extending to the M50 boundary) is limited by access to playing facilities.

Dublin 15 Community Council requested Fingal County Council to consider the site to the west of the M50 Toll Bridge and South of the Luttrellstown Road, in the ownership of NTR. These lands offer ease of access, safety and availability of public transport, and also satisfy the principles of sustainability now while meeting the demands of the future. We were delighted with the news that Fingal County Council purchased these lands and gave the club a 35 year lease on the lands in January 2006. The community council supported their application for lotto funding to develop the lands as playing pitches.

4.3 Infrastructure - Health

Presently Primary Healthcare facilities are principally delivered from six Health Centres in the Dublin 15 area namely, Roselawn, Hartstown, Damastown, Corduff and Mountview.

The community council supported the report commissioned by the Primary Health Group Mulhuddart recommending the establishment of a Primary Healthcare centre. This year a new Primary Care Centre in the Mulhuddart area was approved by the Tánaiste and Minister for Health and Children, Mary Harney. .

A HSE project team has been established to progress the development of this new Primary Care centre. Additionally work is in progress from a capital planning perspective to develop further Primary Healthcare facilities for the entire population of North West Dublin.

4.4 Infrastructure - Transportation

The increasing amount of time being spent by individuals commuting has now become one of the top two issues causing concern for residents of Dublin 15.

Over the past year there has been a noticeable deterioration in the time taken by persons on internal trips around Dublin 15 and even longer delays on commuter road based journeys. The 39 Bus can now take up to 135 minutes to complete its journey into the city centre during peak morning traffic. The lack of capacity on the morning train services contributes to overcrowding and the sight of passengers fainting on the trains is now a regular occurrence.

As people continue to move into the area the limited capacity on our bus and train services are coming under increasing pressure. Simultaneously the new arrivals are also adding to the road based congestion in Dublin 15.

The Community Council has had a long term objective in place for some years to encourage the development and implementation of a coherent and integrated transportation strategy for the Greater Blanchardstown Area. Over the past year there have been a number of developments which will move matters forward in achieving that goal

- Commencement on the M50 upgrade project.
- Approval of investment and commencement of the works for a new heavy rail station at Docklands.
- Allocation in the 2007 Budget for the Dept. of Transport for works associated with the electrification of the Maynooth Rail line.
- Link to be provided with the Maynooth rail service at Drumcondra with the proposed Metro North route.

Whilst the foregoing developments are welcome, much remains to be done in providing this area with an acceptable level of public transport service.

The outline plan that we see as being necessary to provide this area with a proper mobility strategy is to focus on:

- Ensuring that residents in new estates have immediate access to public transport upon the first dwelling being occupied.
- That a quality local bus service is established in the New Year and rolled out without undue delay.
- Concentration on providing a proper QBC network for commuters to / from Dublin 15.
- Additional buses are made available to Dublin Bus for services in this area.
- Creation of new bus routes with more direct services from the outlying new areas to the city centre.
- Doubling of the off peak rail services on the Maynooth line in 2007 with an ultimate aim of no more than 20minutes between services in off peak.
- Electrification of the Maynooth line to ensure that our rail services can use the planned interconnector tunnel.

Over the past year we have lobbied hard for improvements in the new 2007 train timetable. The last train will depart Pearse Station at 23.10 instead of at 22.30 as at present, with an additional service now in the off peak evening services.

However, we still have not managed to persuade Irish Rail to ramp up the general off peak frequency – despite the obvious growth in the population numbers here.

We have attended a number of meetings over the past year with our elected representatives and various officials associated with transportation issues.

In addition we have made a number of submissions in relation to key transportation issues. Our chief success was in ensuring that the Metro North route was modified to provide a link up with Drumcondra train station to ensure that passengers using the Maynooth rail line could link up the new Metro North service. This new service will provide a number of new options for the users of the Maynooth line. It will enable us to travel to the Airport and DCU entirely by rail and also to go directly into the city centre and to link up with the other LUAS services.

Over the forthcoming year we will focus on getting in place improvements that will shorten journey times for road based commuters and provide a more frequent and flexible rail based service.

5.0 Representation on other bodies.

The Dublin 15 Community Council is represented on various bodies; the Blanchardstown Area Partnership, Chamber of Commerce, Fingal Tourism Initiative, Liffey Valley Advisory Committee, Forum 15, and Fingal Community Forum. This provides influence and ensures the representatives on these bodies have a strong feedback mechanism.

5.1 Blanchardstown Area Partnership

The Community Council is represented on the Community Development Planning Implementation Board of the Blanchardstown Area Partnership.

Community Development PIB

The Community Development PIB focuses on issues of Community Development, Family Support, Childcare and Health. There are currently ten members of the Community Development PIB including eight community representatives and two statutory representatives.

Strategic Role of the PIB

- Provide real support for Community Development in Dublin 15
- Ensure synergy between different organisations
- Lobbying locally / regionally / nationally
- Bringing a community voice to the table
- Advocating for the interests of community residents
- Mapping of activity, sharing information
- Ensuring consultation that leads to action
- Evaluation
- Ensure information is distributed to the community

Key Actions for 2006

Working with local community groups to develop the following:

- Playgrounds
- Health facilities
- Family support
- Childcare
- Funding for community groups
- Women's refuge

5.2 Fingal Community Forum

Part of the reforms of Local Government in Ireland was the establishment of Community Forums to represent the voice of the community & voluntary sectors in local government decision making.

The Fingal Community Forum was established in March 2000. It acts as the collective voice of the community and voluntary sector in Fingal County and elects community representatives to various local, regional and national decision-making bodies.

The Dublin 15 Community Council is represented on Fingal Community Forum by 3 members. One member Barbra Brennan is Chairperson of the Fingal Community Forum, The other Dublin 15 Community Council representatives sit on the Planning & Development Strategic Planning Committee of Fingal County Council and the Economic & Social Monitoring Strategic Planning Committee of Fingal County Council, where they represent the community & voluntary sectors for the entire county.

Barbra Brennan has served on the Fingal County Development Board since the inaugural meeting in 2000. The County Development Board in Fingal is a collection 34 people who represent local authority (8 seats), local development agencies (5 seats), state agencies (13 seats) and the social partners – including the community & voluntary sectors (8 seats).

Each County Development Board was required to prepare and oversee the implementation of a ten year county/city Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development, which would provide the template guiding all public services and local development activities locally; in effect bringing a more coherent approach to the planning and delivery of services at local level. The Dublin 15 Community Council took the opportunity to ensure the issues that affect this community were addressed in the plan.

Dublin 15 Community Council recommends that all community, voluntary and residents associations affiliate to Fingal Community Forum to ensure that you have a voice in the decisions that affect your area. To register contact:

Olive Black

Fingal Community & Voluntary Forum

P.O. Box 174 County Hall, Main Street, Swords, Co Dublin

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5.3 Forum 15

Forum 15 is funded and supported by Blanchardstown Area Partnership to act as a platform to provide support, facilitation, assistance and information to local community and voluntary groups in the Dublin 15 area.

Forum 15 (then called Blanchardstown Community Forum) was established in 2001 a part time development worker was employed in 2002. The Forum began to work in consultation with the Local Drugs Task Force and RAPID to elect community representatives onto these structures and provide ongoing support for them which has continued to the present day. 2003 saw the first year of the Forum being officially incorporated as an independent corporation with its own Board and administrative structure. The name of the organisation was changed from Blanchardstown Community Forum to Forum 15 to reflect the inclusion of the electoral area of Castleknock.

Dublin 15 Community Council has affiliated to Forum 15. While the geographical areas of Forum 15 and the community council are the same, the community council is a lobby group which looks to develop a consensus and then lobby for improvements in Public Transport, Environment, Education, Crime Prevention, Job Creation, Planning and Development, Recreational Facilities, Infrastructure and Tourist facilities.

The Dublin 15 Community Council encourages all community, voluntary and residents associations to affiliate to Forum15 and avail of the training & support provided.

5.4 Fingal Tourism and the Liffey Valley Advisory Committee

Mary Eustace (Strawberry Beds Residents Association & Dublin 15 Community Council) was appointed at the Fingal County Council Meeting held on 13th September, 2004 as Member to the Joint Fingal and South Dublin Liffey Valley Management Advisory Committee.

The OPW commissioned a report “Draft Strategy – Towards a Liffey Valley Park”, the Dublin 15 Community Council made a submission raising the following issues:

- ❑ Liffey Valley report fails to address the issue of designating the area a National Park or provide a clear roadmap of how this objective will be achieved.
- ❑ Management proposals lack accountability, and are a coordination body reliant on voluntary efforts by individual county councils.
- ❑ Experience with the existing Liffey Valley management advisory committees have demonstrated little progress with only 5 meetings in the last 15 years.
- ❑ Proposals dilute the community involvement in the existing Liffey Valley management advisory committees; need to be amended to include at least 1 community representative.
- ❑ Community representation needs to be given equal status with the commercial interest’s representative.

On a more positive side, many of the proposals put forward by the community council in 20 June 2005 (i.e. access, Tourism & active use, potential for linkages to other amenity, recreational & cultural attractions) were accepted.

5.5 Taskforce on Active Citizenship.

The Taskforce on Active Citizenship was established to advise the Government on the steps that can be taken to ensure that the wealth of civic spirit and active participation in Ireland continues to grow and develop.

An active citizen definition:

- ❑ civic participation: for example contacting a local councillor or T.D. about an issue of public interest or attending a public meeting;
- ❑ formal volunteering/community involvement:

The Taskforce hosted two consultation seminars in the Dublin region, both of which were attended by representatives from the Dublin 15 Community Council. In his opening address at a public consultation meeting An Taoiseach said “a healthy democracy depends on the extent to which citizens are engaged in the issues that affect them”.

We raised the issues of:

- ❑ Anecdotal evidence suggests growing numbers of people feel they are too busy to contribute to their local communities.
- ❑ Barriers towards getting people involved such as practical issues like insurance, administration, and training for volunteers.
- ❑ The need to plan communities with all the necessary infrastructure – not just build houses

Our participation in the consultation seminars and the issues we raised were picked up and publicized by the national media.

6.0 Recognition of the Community Council's work.

Dublin 15 Community Council entered the Fingal County Council *Community Group of The Year* competition for 2006. The Community Council was runner up in the Representative Organisations Category where we were narrowly beaten by the overall winner.

Conclusion

The foregoing issues illustrate why we need a strong Community Council and why we always need to be vigilant and ensure that ordinary people's voices are heard.

The issues facing community groups in Dublin 15 can seem to be insurmountable but together we can make a difference and achieve more together than separately.

The Community Council welcomes all voluntary groups in the Dublin 15 postal district and provides an environment where we can help each other to make the Dublin 15 area a great place to live in.

With your support we can carry on and continue to make a difference.