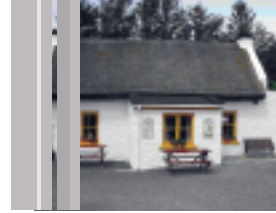


Planning, and Economic Development

The Council launched a new integrated on-line planning application search facility E-plan in 2004. This allows the public access to the planning service over the web 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



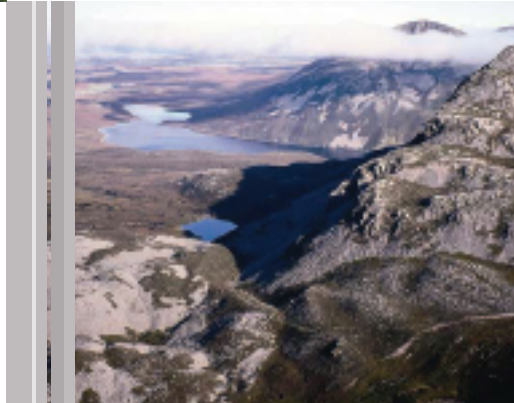
1.



2.



3.



4.



5.

- 1. High Road, Letterkenny
- 2. Improvement works at Ballybofey/Stranorlar bridge
- 3. Traditional Thatched Cottage in Donegal
- 4. Derryveagh
- 5. Stranolar, Donegal

PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Central Planning Unit

The Central Planning Unit became fully operational in 2003. Work was completed early in the year on the Operational Programme for the County Development Plan. This non-statutory document identified what has to be done to convert the goals, objectives, and policies of the County Development Plan into reality. Considerable work was also carried out on the Record of Protected Structures which was adopted on the 1 December 2003. The record contains 340 structures.

Local Area Plans were prepared and adopted for, Bundoran, Muff, Bridgend, Killea, and Burnfoot. Work continued on preparing local area plans for Gweedore, Killybegs, Ballyshannon and Donegal Town. The Unit was also involved in the preparation of the variation to the Letterkenny Environs Plan.

The review of the County Development Plan commenced in July 2004 and to comply with the strict timeframes laid down in legislation, must be finalised within 2 years.

A Conservation Officer was appointed in July 2004 to provide specialist skills to feed into the Record of Protected Structures and the Conservation Grants Scheme. The table below details the grants which were allocated in 2004:

| Development | Details of Work carried out | Amount allocated |
|------------------------------------|--|------------------|
| St Aengus' Church Burt | Repair of the copper roof | €22,500 |
| 3 Mountsouthwell Mews, Letterkenny | Repair of the natural slate roof | €10,000 |
| St Connall's Church, Ardara | Restoration of church windows and lime plaster repair | €22,500 |
| The Green, Ramelton | Material report of external render | €1,300 |
| St Mary's Church, Lagg | Repair of cast iron rainwater goods | €13,000 |
| Murray Lodge, Killybegs | Repair of natural slate roof, decorative fascia and soffit | €20,700 |
| St Finian's Church, Greencastle | Restoration of stained glass windows | €6154.61 |

Planning and Development Control

With the introduction of the new regulations in 2002, all invalid applications must be recorded. The number of applications received in 2003 and 2004 increased to 7,138 and 8,564, respectively. Of these, 26.8% were invalid in 2003 and 23% were invalid in 2004. The high percentage of invalid applications increases the workloads of the planning staff and highlights the need for the public and agents to exercise more care when submitting their applications.

The following table details the Councils performance in processing planning applications in the period of the report:

2003

| | Donegal | Glenties | Inishowen | Letterkenny | Milford | Stranolar |
|--------------------------|---------|----------|-----------|-------------|---------|-----------|
| Received | 1216 | 1544 | 1900 | 830 | 1002 | 646 |
| % Granted | 82 | 83 | 86 | 86 | 83 | 88 |
| % Refused | 18 | 17 | 14 | 14 | 17 | 12 |
| % Deferred | 29 | 36 | 46 | 40 | 40 | 38 |
| % Decided within 8 weeks | 79 | 67 | 60 | 69 | 68 | 79 |
| % Invalid | 24 | 28 | 35 | 27 | 15 | 24 |

2004

| | Donegal | Glenties | Inishowen | Letterkenny | Milford | Stranolar |
|--------------------------|---------|----------|-----------|-------------|---------|-----------|
| Received | 1716 | 1811 | 2288 | 808 | 1310 | 631 |
| % Granted | 82 | 77 | 82 | 86 | 80 | 94 |
| % Refused | 18 | 23 | 18 | 14 | 20 | 6 |
| % Deferred | 27 | 37 | 30 | 27 | 27 | 28 |
| % Decided within 8 weeks | 74 | 63 | 57 | 58 | 70 | 68 |
| % Invalid | 25 | 17 | 30 | 36 | 12 | 16 |

Planning On-line

An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Patrick McGowan, officially launched the new integrated online planning application search facility EPlanning in 2004.

EPlanning (www.donegal.ie/dcc/eplanning) enables the public to access the planning service over the web. Whereas traditionally customers had to either travel to or telephone a Council office to have a query answered, the new service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Updated on a daily basis, it is now possible to access information on current Planning Application files, including documentation, maps and plans. This is complimented by a list of answers to frequently asked questions regarding the planning process, guides, weekly lists and Planner contact details. Public internet access points are available at over 75 sites across the county, including libraries and Public Service Centres. Future phases of this project will include provision for online public submissions on applications, online payments and automated notification of decisions by email paving the way for future online planning applications.

Irish Central Border Area Network - ICBAN

ICBAN was established in 1995 to respond to the unique economic and social needs of the border regions. ICBAN consists of the member authorities of Armagh, Cavan, Cookstown, Donegal, Dungannon, Fermanagh, Leitrim, Monaghan, Omagh and Sligo.

Funding through Peace II for the ICBAN Small Rural Roads Network Project was announced in November 2003, with a number of routes receiving funding of approximately €500,000.

URBAN AND VILLAGE RENEWAL PROGRAMME 2000 – 2006

Village Programme

In January 2003, the Council advertised for “expressions of interest” for funding in respect of the 2000 – 2006 Village Programme. A total of 71 applications were received. The applications were divided between Gaeltacht and Non-Gaeltacht Villages.

Gaeltacht Villages

In May 2003, the Council submitted the Gaeltacht Village Schedule to An Roinn, Gnothai Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta for funding approval for proposed renewal works in 25 villages, together with the provision of local area plans for 2 centres. An Roinn agreed to provide funding of €300,000 for the proposed works and the Council provided match funding for the projects concerned.

The Council also secured funding of €352,000 from An Roinn in 2004 for village renewal works, to consist of provision of footpaths, street furniture, litterbins and landscaping works. This funding was also match-funded from the Council’s own resources.

Allocation from the Donegal led Peace II Taskforce Funding in the sum of €300,000 was secured from the Donegal Peace II Task Force in 2003 for villages outside the Gaeltacht and the applications were divided into four categories, as follows:

Category 1: No renewal works carried out in the previous Programme. Priority one status for funding.

Category 2: Works carried out in previous Programme. Priority given to villages in close proximity to the border.

Category 3: Applications from centres already earmarked for larger Environmental Improvement Schemes. Applications not considered for funding from this source.

Category 4: Applications for ineligible works under the Programme.

Applications from Category 1 (i.e. 9 villages) and Category 2 (i.e. 10 villages) were prioritised with priority afforded to villages in Category 1. Favourable consideration was given to applications that demonstrated a strong community-led focus with evidence of positive local effort for regeneration projects in the village.

The type of works approved for funding included, provision of signage, landscaping, stonewalling, street furniture and modest paving and lighting works.

In 2004, the Council was once again successful in securing funding of €300,000 from Peace II for village renewal works throughout the county. The allocation was divided equally between the six electoral areas and the Members of the Council prioritised the following villages for renewal works:

| Electoral Area | Village Allocated Funding |
|----------------|---------------------------|
| Letterkenny | Raphoe |
| Donegal | Carrick / Dunkineely |
| Glenties | Stramartin / Stranacorra |
| Milford | Kilmacrennan / Glen |
| Inishowen | Culdaff / Malin |
| Stranorlar | Dromore Bridge |

Works also progressed on the Environmental Improvement Works in the major centres in the County as follows:

Ramelton

The environmental improvement works in Ramelton were completed in 2004. The works included improvements to the pedestrian walkway along the River Lennon, improvements to pavements and the carriageway, construction of a stone wall at the bottom of the Tank Brae, undergrounding of services, tree planting and the provision of street furniture.

Kilcar

In September 2003, environmental improvements works commenced in Kilcar. The works included improvements to pavements, undergrounding of services, new lighting, tree planting and the provision of street furniture at the Main Street. The work was substantially completed in 2004. A further phase of works, at the bottom of the town, is scheduled to be carried out in 2005.

Carrigart

Improvement works on the Main Street, consisting of undergrounding of overhead cables, erection of decorative lighting, provision of street furniture, landscaping works and provision of new footpaths, was completed in 2004.

Falcarragh - Development of Car Park

Work commenced in 2004 to develop a car park on lands to the rear of the Main Street. The car park will accommodate up to 30 vehicles and includes a pedestrian link to the Main Street. Those works are being carried out by the Councils own local Roads Area staff and are due to be completed in early 2005.

Ballybofey/Stranorlar - Approach to Bridge

In Ballybofey, works also got underway in 2004 to carry out improvement works from MacCumhaill's Park to the bridge. These works consisted of undergrounding of overhead cables, erection of decorative lighting, provision of new footpaths/paving, stone walls and landscaping works.

Economic Development Fund

The Economic Development Fund, which was set up as a recommendation of the Donegal Employment Initiative Task Force in September 1998, continued to be instrumental in promoting economic growth in the county.

- The Fund financially assisted the Broadband Fibre Optic Network in Letterkenny - (Metropolitan Area Network), which was completed in 2004.
- In 2004, the Members of the Council resolved to dispose of premises at Bree, Malin Head and Lisfannon, Buncrana to Forward Emphasis (International) Ltd. and Seatem (Donegal) Ltd., respectively. Both of these companies are involved in the tele-sales market and have created much needed employment in the Inishowen area.
- The contracts for sales, to dispose of lands at Glencrow, Moville to a group of businessmen from the area were signed in 2004. This sale signals a new Commercial Development Park in Moville which will cater for the re-location and expansion of existing business and also attract further businesses to the area.
- 23.1 acres of land at Railway Road, Stranorlar was acquired, for a variety of purposes including sport and recreation.

Town Renewal Tax Incentive Scheme 2003

The Council continued to actively promote the scheme. The following table illustrates uptake of the Scheme to date:

| Town | No. of Preliminary Certificates Issued | No. of Final Certificates Issued |
|---------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Ardara | 2 | 1 |
| Ballybofey/ Stranorlar | 1 | 1 |
| Ballyshannon | 2 | - |
| Moville | 8 | 1 |
| Ramelton | 4 | 2 |
| Totals | 17 | 5 |

The Scheme has been extended to the 31 July 2006, subject to a valid planning application being lodged with the Council before the 31 December 2004.

Development Charges

Under the Local Government (Planning & Development) Act 1963, the Council can impose conditions on applications, which are granted planning permission, requiring a contribution towards infrastructural works, which will benefit the proposed development. The monies collected are then re-invested in capital works by the various services of the Council. Between the years of 1996 and 2002, a total of €7.2 million was re-invested into Council Services.

As agreed with the elected members, the Roads/Car Parking monies are allocated directly to the local Engineer to spend

on the road network where the monies were levied and collected. However, in some cases developers have extended the public infrastructure such as roads, footpaths, drainage and public lighting, in lieu of having charges levied against them. The estimated value of this work is in the region of €1 million.

In 2003, an amount of €3.86 million was collected, which is an increase of €1.35 million on the amount collected in 2002.

In March 2004, the Council agreed a Development Contribution Scheme, which was enacted under the Planning & Development Act 2000. The Scheme was adopted following a period of public consultation and is similar to that under the previous development charge scheme, whereby successful planning applications are levied for a contribution towards public infrastructure and facilities benefiting development in the area.

In 2004, in excess of €5.1 million was collected, which represents an increase of €1.25 million on the 2003 figure. This is a significant increase in view of the fact that the 2003 collection figures included a “once off” payment of €500,000.

In October 2004, the Development Charges Unit was strengthened with the appointment of a number of staff, to target the collection of development charges in each electoral area. The Unit is presently targeting the top 300 debtors in the County.

Substantial work was carried out in 2003 throughout the County in dealing with enforcement and this is illustrated in table 6 below. In 2004, the Council obtained some high profile successes in both the High Court and the Supreme Court. This reinforces the Councils message that flagrant disregard for the Planning Laws will not be tolerated:

Enforcement Figures for 2003 and 2004 are as follows:

| | 2003 | 2004 |
|--------------------------------------|------|------|
| No. of Warning Letters issued | 172 | 71 |
| No of Enforcement Notices Served | 30 | 39 |
| No of prosecutions under Section 157 | 18 | 11 |
| No of injunctions obtained | 1 | 3 |

In addition to the above, 70 cases were resolved in 2003.

Planning and Economic Development SPC – ACTIVITIES

The Planning and Economic Development SPC continued its activities including review, where applicable, of policies and procedures in relation to the following topics:

- Town Renewal Scheme
- Regional Planning Guidelines
- Record of Protected Structures
- Tunes Plateau Windfarm
- County Development Plan
- Development Contribution Scheme

Membership

Councillor

- Cllr Jimmy Harte (chair)
- Cllr Sean Maloney
- Cllr Sean McEniff
- Cllr Rena Donaghey
- Cllr Gerry Crawford
- Cllr Paddy Kelly
- Cllr Noel McGinley
- Cllr Bernard McGlinchey
- Cllr J.J. Reid
- Cllr John Boyle
- Cllr T Slowey
- Cllr Albert Doherty
- Cllr Liam Blaney
- Cllr Terry McEniff

Sectoral

- Mr Seamus Doherty
- Mr Leonard Roarty
- Ms Emily Whelan
- Mr Jackie McNair
- Mr Seamus Bovaird
- Mr Jack Hickey
- Mr Eunan Cunningham