

CORPORATE SERVICES DIRECTORATE

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CORPORATE SERVICES SEIRHÍSÍ CORPARÁIDEACHA

INTRODUCTION

The principal areas of activity in the Corporate Services Directorate include:

- Human Resource Management, including Staff Welfare, Health and Safety, Partnership and Organisation Development;
- General Purposes Division, including Meetings Administrator, services for Elected Members, Higher Education Grants, Irish Language Development, Register of Electors, Reprographics and the Communications Office;
- Electoral Areas Division, including Customer Services, Motor Taxation, Cash Receipting, Water Billing and follow up and support to the Electoral Area Committees;
- Information Systems Division.

The members will be aware that some very difficult decisions have had to be made in recent weeks with regard to the non-renewal of temporary contracts of employment, having regard to the financial outlook for 2009 and the downturn in activity levels in a number of areas. A key role for the Human Resources Department is to ensure that this process is managed effectively and that every assistance possible is provided to the staff members concerned. The work of the Department will be significantly enhanced by the continued roll-out of the integrated Human Resources, Payroll and Superannuation system in 2009, for which Donegal is one of the national pilot sites. Further details are set out later in this report.

Over the past year, significant changes have been introduced to streamline the business of the elected Council. The General Purposes Committee has been discontinued and monthly Council meetings, with an earlier start time, have been introduced. In the first half of 2009, proposals for the revision of the Committee structure of the Council will be devised by a working group of members and officials and it is hoped that agreed new arrangements will be in place prior to the holding of the local elections in June.

The information on customer service activity set out in this report on Page 217 demonstrates the continued success of the Public Service Centres. A major challenge for the early part of 2009 will be the reorganization of services to reflect the changes to Electoral Area boundaries from June 2009, including the amalgamation of the Letterkenny and Milford Electoral Areas.

The report also outlines the continued significant investment being made in information and communication technologies. Government policy on the achievement of further efficiency dividends, including the recent statement on Transforming Public Services, provides a strategic context within which the benefits of these investments can be maximized.

The following pages review the progress made in 2008 and highlight the key objectives for 2009.

CORPORATE SERVICES
SEIRHÍSÍ CORPARÁIDEACHA

Draft Budgeted Expenditure: €32,387,030

Draft Budgeted Income: €19,248,490

The following pages set out the above as per each relevant Division.

Division D

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT
BAINISTIÚ FORBRAÍOCHTA

Draft Budgeted Expenditure: €1,500

Draft Budgeted Income: €Nil

(Pages 18-20 of Blue Pages)

TWINNING LOCAL AUTHORITY AREAS

The Draft Revenue Budget for 2009 includes a provision of €1,500 under the above.

RECREATION & AMENITY
CAITHEAMH AIMSIRE AGUS TAITNEAMHACHT

Draft Budgeted Expenditure: €120,366

Draft Budgeted Income: €Nil

(Pages 25-27 of Blue Pages)

FORBAIRT NA GAELIGE 2009

Tá soláthar iomlán de €120,366 i mbuiséad na bliana seo le forbairt a dhéanamh ar na seirbhísí i nGaeilge ó Chomhairle Contae Dhún na nGall.

Leanfaidh Comhairle Contae Dhún na nGall ag neartú na seirbhísí i nGaeilge a forbraíodh inár gcéad Scéim Teanga d'Údaráis Áitiúla Dhún na nGall (2005-2008) agus cuirfear tús leis an obair chun an scéim úr a chur i bhfeidhm, mar atá Scéim Teanga Údaráis Áitiúla Dhún na nGall 2008-2011, faoi Alt 11 d'Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003, chomh maith le cur i bhfeidhm eilimintí eile den Acht de réir mar a bhaineann siad le hobair na Comhairle. Is é a bheas i gceist leis seo ná réimse leathan tograí agus dualgas reachtúil ar a n-áirítear oiliúint, aistriúchán, suíomh idirlín dhátheangach, foirmeacha iarratais dhátheangacha, earcaíocht, Scéim Scoláireachta Gaeltachta do dhaoine óga, urraíocht ar dhuais Ghlór na nGael srl.

Mar aitheantas ar na dualgais mhóra atá orainn seirbhís iomlán i nGaeilge a chur ar fáil ón Ionad Seirbhísí Pobail ar an Chlochán Liath, agus le tús a chur leis an obair chun an Ghaeilge a chur chun tosaigh mar theanga oibre na hoifige seo faoin bhliain 2020, leanfaidh an Chomhairle lena tacaíocht do réimse leathan cúrsaí fá choinne ball foirne atá lonnaithe san Ionad Seirbhísí Pobail. Leanfar leis an tacaíocht ón Chomhairle fosta le Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge de chuid Ollscoil na hÉireann, Má Nuad, a chur fáil do bhail foirne in achan Ionad Seirbhísí Pobail dár gcuid. Féachfaidh an Chomhairle le comhpháirtíochtaí a fhorbairt le heagrais eile sa dóigh is gur féidir costais oiliúna a roinnt agus luach níos fearr ar airgead a bhaint amach.

Leanfaidh an Chomhairle lena tacaíocht don Scéim Scoláireachta, scéim atá mar chomhpháirtíocht idir Choiste na Gaeilge agus na Coláistí Samhraidh i nDún na nGall. Faoin scéim seo, cuireann an Chomhairle agus na Coláistí líon iomlán de 34 Scoláireacht Ghaeltachta ar fáil do dhaoine óga i nDún na nGall atá idir 10-18 mbliana.

Beidh réimse seirbhísí aistriúcháin de dhíth ar an Chomhairle chomh maith, agus caithfidh an Chomhairle cur leis an mhéid ábhar a théann amach sa dá theanga, lenár gcoimitmintí ar fad faoin Acht Teanga a chomhlíonadh. Cuireann an tAcht dualgas ar an Chomhairle réimse leathan cáipéisí polasaí, tuarascálacha, agus ábhar eile srl a chur ar fáil sa dá theanga oifigiúla agus tá soláthar déanta faoi na Stiúrthóireachtaí cuí le seirbhísí aistriúcháin sheachtracha a fháil leis an obair sin a dhéanamh.

Sa bhreis air seo, déanann an Chomhairle cuid mhór obair aistriúcháin go laethúil, agus tá méadú suntasach ar an aistriú seo mar gheall ar Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla agus an Scéim Teanga. Tá dualgas orainn an dátheangachas a chur i bhfeidhm, gan teip, ar an suíomh idirlín, inár gcuid preas-ráiteas, inár mbileoga eolais, agus inár bhfoirmeacha iarratais. Déanann ár mbaill foirne féin cuid mhaith den obair seo go himmheánach, agus leanfar leis an obair seo. Mar sin féin, tá gá le buiséad beag solúbtha le go mbeifí in ann seirbhísí seachtracha a úsáid le aistriúchán a dhéanamh go héifeachtach.

Féachfaidh an Chomhairle:

- le cur le próifíl, imeachtaí agus gníomhaíochtaí Sheachtain na Gaeilge i mí Mhárta, tríd na hIonaid Seirbhísí Pobail agus na Leabharlanna agus ionaid eile.
- le dul i gcomhpháirtíocht le gníomhaireachtaí eile ar bhonn trasteorann leis an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn ar fud an iarthuaiscirt, Tír Eoghain, Doire, agus Fear Manach san áireamh.

IRISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT 2009

There is a total provision of €120,366 in this years budget for the development of services in Irish from Donegal County Council.

Donegal County Council will continue to consolidate on the services through Irish developed in the lifetime of our first Donegal Local Authorities Scheme (2005 - 2008) and will commence work on the implementation of new Donegal Local Authorities Language Scheme 2008-2011, under Article 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003, including the implementation of other elements of the Act as they relate to the work of the Council. This will involve a wide range of projects and statutory obligations including training, translation, maintaining and further developing the bilingual website, bilingual application forms, recruitment, the Gaeltacht Scholarship Scheme and the sponsorship of a Glór na nGael award.

In recognition of the major commitment to provide a complete service through Irish from the Dungloe Public Service Centre, and to work towards developing the Irish language as the working language of the office by 2020, the Council will continue the provision of a range of Irish language courses for members of staff based in Dungloe. The European Certificate in Irish, provided by the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, will be the primary course of education supported by the Council for staff in all our Public Service Centres. The Council will seek to create partnerships with other agencies so that cost-effectiveness can be maximised in the area of staff training.

The Council will maintain its support for the Gaeltacht Scholarship Scheme, which is a partnership between the Council's Coiste na Gaeilge and the Summer Colleges in Donegal. Under this scheme, the Council and the Colleges provide a total of 34 Scholarships for young people from Donegal between the ages of 10-18.

The Council will continue to require a range of translation services and will need to increase the volume of material provided bilingually, to fulfil our commitments under the Act. The Official Languages Act, and our Language Scheme, places an obligation on the Council to provide a wide range of policy documents, reports, and other printed material in both official languages and appropriate provisions are being made within each Directorate to commission external translation services to fulfil that role.

In addition, the Council requires ongoing daily translations, and this has greatly increased as a result of the Official Languages Act and our Language Scheme. In particular, we now have an obligation to ensure full bilingualism on our website, in our press-releases, in our brochures and information leaflets, and in our application forms. Our own staff carry out a proportion of this work internally, and this will continue. However, there is a need for a small flexible translation budget to allow for material to be translated externally.

The Council will:

- Seek to increase the profile, and range of activities and events during Irish Language Week in March, through our Library Services, Public Service Centres and other venues.

Work in partnership with other agencies on a cross-border basis to promote the Irish language in partnership with our neighbours in Tyrone, Derry and Fermanagh.

Division G

AGRICULTURE, EDUCATION, HEALTH & WELFARE TALMHAÍOCHT, OIDEACHAS, SLÁINTE AGUS LEAS

Draft Budgeted Expenditure: €14,069,954

Draft Budgeted Income: €13,995,612

(Pages 28-30 of Blue Pages)

HIGHER EDUCATION GRANTS

Donegal County Council awards grants and pays fees under the Local Authorities (Higher Education Grants) Act 1968 - 1992. The Council administers the scheme on behalf of the Department of Education & Science. The Draft Revenue Budget for 2009 includes a provision of €7,503,000 of which €7,495,612 is recoupable from the Department.

Monies expended directly on the Scheme (grants and fees) are fully recouped from the Department, except for a fixed sum of €7,388. The cost of staff salaries and indirect costs such as telephone, printing & stationery, advertising, travel, provision and maintenance of computer equipment and systems are not recoupable. Another significant hidden cost arises from the delay by the Department of Education & Science in refunding eligible expenditure to the Council as this results in the Council having to carry the expenditure on overdraft in the interim.

The Minister for Education announced in June 2006 that the Vocational Educational Committees were to be given sole responsibility for the administration of third level student maintenance grant schemes. Arrangements for this transfer have still not been completed and it is expected that Local Authorities will continue to process grant applications for the 2009/2010 academic year.

GRANTS AWARDED 2008

Student Type	New	Renewal
1 Grants Awarded	435	663

A total of 1400 applications were received in 2008. Of these 1098 grants were awarded to undergraduate and postgraduate students in Ireland, and undergraduate students in the U.K.

- 962 undergraduate students
- 136 postgraduate students

SUPERANNUATION

The Draft Revenue Budget for 2009 includes a provision of €6.5million under this heading for retired VEC Personnel. This expenditure is 100% recoupable.

Division H

MISCELLANEOUS

ÉAGSÚIL

Budgeted Expenditure: €4,508,962

Budgeted Income: €2,048,676

(Pages 31-33 of Blue Pages)

MOTOR TAXATION SERVICE

Motor Taxation and related services continue to be available in the five Public Service Centres at Carndonagh, Milford, Letterkenny, Dungloe and Donegal Town as well as Lifford. All these offices issue motor vehicle licences (generally known as motor tax discs), driving licences, trade plates for motor traders, duplicate registration books, duplicate vehicle registration certificates and duplicate motor tax discs are also issued. A full service is available from any of the centres, irrespective of the customer's place of residence.

The Draft Revenue Budget for 2009 includes a provision of €1,323,595 under this heading.

Projected Motor Tax Receipts and Transactions for 2008

	Revenue	Revenue %	Transactions	Transactions %
Lifford	€3,464,780	12%	24,487	13%
Carndonagh	€5,141,925	18%	32,935	17%
Letterkenny	€8,568,968	31%	61,263	32%
Milford	€2,123,800	8%	14,910	8%
Dungloe	€3,164,635	11%	22,145	11%
Donegal Town	€5,594,927	20%	36,929	19%
Total	€28,059,035	100%	192,669	100%

Year	Transactions	Revenue
2003	143,355	€21,042,391
2004	142,766	€22,324,869
2005	168,201	€23,276,317
2006	183,356	€24,765,917
2007	193,253	€26,196,179
2008	192,668 (E)	€28,059,035 (E)

88% of motor tax revenue has been collected in the Public Service Centres and 87% of motor tax business in the county is being transacted there.

POSTAL APPLICATIONS

For the period Jan to Sept 2008, 95.33% of motor tax transactions were dealt with over the counter (92.7% in 2007). Driving licence applications received over the counter are always posted out the next working day (posting out of licences helps to confirm identity and reduce fraud).

The total number of postal applications received in 2007 was 12,402. The total number of postal applications received to date in 2008 (30th Nov 2008) is 11,450. Indications are that the total number of applications received by post in 2008 will be similar to 2007. For the period January to September 2008, 83.85% of motor tax postal applications were dealt with on the day received and 61.77% of driving licences were dealt with on the day of receipt with the remaining 38.23% (often exchange driving licences which have to be verified with the relevant issuing Authority before they can be processed) generally dealt with within three days.

TAXING ON THE INTERNET WWW.MOTORTAX.IE

The online motor tax service now provides the option to renew tax on private cars, motorcycles, vehicles adapted for use by disabled persons, first taxation of new or second hand imported vehicles in the following tax classes - private, motorcycles, agricultural tractors/excavators and vehicles adapted for use by disabled drivers.

Approximately 16.89% of vehicle owners in Donegal have availed of the option to renew their motor tax online in 2008 (at 31st Oct 2008). Donegal remains the lowest online motor tax user countrywide, a contributory factor presumably being the convenience of service availability due to decentralisation. The Council continues to actively promote the use of the online service.

CHANGE OF VEHICLE OWNERSHIP ONLINE www.motortrans.ie

A new service to allow garages to carry out change of vehicle ownership online went live in May 2008. Dealers can also track the ownership changes. At the 14th Nov 08, 425 motor dealers were registered to process change of ownerships doing up to 5,000 applications per week. VRU are focussing on main dealers at present. So far the CVO online system is accounting for 30% of the overall change of ownership business being transacted in

Shannon. All change of ownerships processed by the garages are on the system by 6am the next morning.

www.motortax.ie - A FURTHER IMPROVEMENT IN VRU

A new online facility has also been introduced which allows changes in vehicle ownership to be tracked if they have occurred in the previous 6 months although it doesn't recognise if there has been a renewal of tax on the vehicle in that period.

CO₂ EMISSIONS BASED MOTOR TAX SYSTEM

The Revenue Commissioners, at Vehicle Registration stage determine the CO₂ emissions level of the car (passenger cars). This information is then passed on the National Vehicle file for use in connection with the administration of the Motor Tax System. Vehicles registered abroad only come under the CO₂ system if registered here on or after the 1st July 2008, Low CO₂ emitting cars registered between 1st January 2008 & 30th June 2008 initially were charged on the basis of the engine size then switched to the lower rate on first renewal of tax post 1st July 2008.

Up to the 30th November 2008, 1,172 CO₂ emissions based tax discs have been issued in Donegal.

RATES OF DUTY

The rate of duty increased on the 1st February 2008 and a further increase is to be applied from 1st January 2009. The increases for 2009 are 4% for cars below 2.5 litres and CO₂ bands A to D, and 5% for cars above the 2.5 litre threshold and CO₂ bands E, F and G.

CHANGES TO THE DRIVER LICENSING SYSTEM.

From the 1st July 2008, all drivers holding learner permits/provisional licences must be accompanied by a person who holds a full driving licence in the category for a continuous period of two years.

From October 2008, the VRU, Shannon have commenced the issue of learner permit renewal notices.

Since the 28th April 2008, Guernsey driving licences have been added to the list of countries for driving licence exchange purposes.

CERTIFICATE OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE (CPC)

Changes are being made to the way professional drivers (those who drive for a living) of buses and coaches are being licenced. The changes being introduced in all European Union Member States will affect all professional drivers across the EU and are designed to make our roads safer for all road users. There are two aspects to the changes, the way a person qualifies for

a bus licence, and continuous training for those holding a licence. Professional bus/coach drivers as and from 10 September 2008 must be the holder of a Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC).

There are two ways to qualify for the CPC:-

1. A person holding a valid full licence in the bus licence category on or before 9 September 2008 is automatically entitled to the CPC (acquired rights).
2. A person who qualifies for a bus licence on or after 10 September 2008 must pass a CPC theory test and a CPC driving test as well as the existing theory test and driving test.

In both cases the person must then complete a training programme of 35 hours in the following five years in order to retain the CPC. This will consist of one day in each of the five years.

The rule changes are being introduced across the EU from 10th September 2008 and affect all professional bus drivers. It is intended that similar rules will be introduced for professional truck drivers in September 2009. The Road Safety Authority is responsible for bringing in the changes in Ireland. The following are exempt from the changes:

- Drivers of vehicles for non-commercial purposes e.g. driving as a volunteer.
- Drivers of emergency or rescue vehicles.
- Drivers of vehicles while delivering driving instruction.
- Drivers of vehicles used by a driver in the course of his/her work provided that driving the vehicle is not the drivers principal occupation.

FRANCHISE AND ELECTIONS

The Draft Revenue Budget for 2009 provision of €190,079 covers salaries of clerical staff and franchise fees (salaries not included) payable to Revenue Collectors engaged on the preparation of the Register of Electors. It also includes a sum of €180,000 for running the Local Elections in June 2009.

The Draft 2009/10 Register of Electors was published on 1st November 2008. Advertisements were placed in local newspapers inviting electors to check the Draft and submit a claim, if appropriate. Posters were issued for display in Post Offices, Public Libraries, Garda Stations, Courthouses, and Public Service Centres. This complemented a national advertising campaign undertaken on behalf of Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government.

Donegal County Council received 4600 claims by 25th November and the County Registrar will rule on these at the Revision Sittings. Claimants were issued with notice of the Revision Sitting at which their claim would be heard. The 2009/10 Register will come into force on 15th February 2009 and will, together with any Supplement, be the register in use for the European and Local Elections in June 2009.

Work is in progress on providing access on the Council website www.donegal.ie to a wide range of information on the Register of Electors and Elections. The public will be able to access forms for the Supplementary Voters List, Postal Voters and Special Disabled Voters Supplementary Lists (after 15th February 2009). There will also be a 'Frequently Asked Questions' section. While the Council, as registration authority, has statutory responsibility for compilation of the register in the county, each elector must take a degree of personal responsibility for checking that he/she is registered. Too often, interest only arises in the few days before an election takes place when it is not possible to remedy any omissions. It is our intention to undertake a short publicity campaign in March/April to make the public aware to check the 2009/10 Register and if they are not listed there is still time for inclusion in the supplement.

The Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government carried out a nationwide Electoral Campaign in relation to the preparation of the 2007/08 Register comprising a set of actions and a package of measures to assist local authorities to secure significant improvement in the quality of the Electoral Register in the lead up to the Dáil Elections in May 2007. This was seen as an interim measure in what is an ongoing process of review that is examining every aspect of the compilation of the register, including, inter alia, the use of the PPS number as an individual identifier. No additional resources were made available to local authorities in 2007 and 2008 and, therefore, it has not been possible to recruit additional fieldworkers to assist with data gathering.

A report on the Donegal experience in relation to the Electoral Campaign and the Dáil Elections in 2007, including recommendations on suggested changes to improve the accuracy of the register, was forwarded to the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government for consideration. A number of changes recommended by the Council will require primary or secondary legislation to give them effect. A Franchise Working Group was set up in 2008 by the Local Government Computer Services Board at the request of the City & County Manager's Association to make recommendations in relation to improving the quality of the electoral register.

A requirement to produce, annually, an Edited Register came into force in November 2004. This enables electors to choose how their information will be used i.e. they can stipulate that their name be used only for electoral and other statutory purposes. The edited version of the register can be procured/viewed by any person on payment of the appropriate fee and the information used for commercial or advertising purposes. The General Register is not available for purchase.

The Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government has amended the application form for registration (RFA) to enable applicants to express their preferred form of registration. A facility is available on the Council's website, www.donegal.ie through which voters can check that their name is on the Register.

ELECTED MEMBERS' SERVICES

The Draft Revenue Budget for 2009 includes a provision of €1,324,500 to cover the following members' costs:

Mayor's Allowance	€43,600
Deputy Mayor's Allowance	€10,900
Representational Payment	€522,000
Annual Allowance	€270,000
SPC Chair Allowance	€30,000
External Members	€23,000
Home Travel (Conference etc.)	€145,000
Foreign Travel	€30,000
Member's Insurance	€5,200
Provision of Broadband Access:	€10,000
Mobile Phone Allowance	€16,500
Member's Gratuity Scheme	€180,000
Civic Entertainment	€15,000
Contribution to Members Assocs.	€23,300
Total	€1,324,500

An annual allowance as set out above is paid to both the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor in respect of the reasonable expenses of that office.

The Members Annual Allowance provision for 2009 is €270,000. This fixed annual allowance is designed to defray in a structured way reasonable expenses incurred in attending meetings associated with their Council business. Provision has also been made for the payment of this fixed annual allowance to the members of Ballyshannon Town Council.

The annual allowance provision for Chairs of Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) Chairs remains unchanged at €30,000 in 2009. This represents an allowance of €6000 per annum for each SPC Chair. A sum of €23,000 has also been set aside to cover the cost of travel and subsistence for sectoral representation on Council Committees.

Representational Payment is a salary type payment, which was introduced in January 2002. It is subject to PAYE and PRSI as appropriate. A sum of €522,000 is included in the Draft Revenue Budget for 2009.

An amount of €180,000 has been included in respect of the Member's Gratuity Scheme. It is anticipated that the 2009 Local Elections will result in some change in the membership of the Council and that gratuities will be payable to a number of retiring members.

The sum of €10,000 is included in 2009 to defray the cost of providing members with broadband connectivity in furtherance of the Council's objective of maximising the use of information communications technology and reducing paper communications. This allows members to access a range of Council Services and conduct their business in a more effective and structured way.

Members are entitled to a Mobile Phone Allowance of 50% of total vouched mobile phone costs associated with the carrying out of his/her public duties (subject to a maximum allowance of €600 per annum) the Draft Revenue Budget for 2009 includes a provision for €20,100 to cover such expenses.

A provision of €15,000 has been made in respect of Members Civic Entertainment. This budget provides for the holding of a Civic Reception and a limited number of Local Receptions in 2009 together with the purchase of a number of associated presentational items.

MEMBERS REPRESENTATIVE ASSOCIATIONS

Members of Donegal County Council are represented on the following Associations and contribute to both organisations on a yearly basis. The following expenditure is proposed in 2009: -

- Association of City and County Councils (A.C.C.C) - €17,550
- Local Authority Member's Association - € 5,750.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO OTHER BODIES

Donegal County Council contributes to a number of other Regional Authorities. Provision has been made for the following contributions in 2009:-

Border Regional Authority	€154,277
The Assembly of European Regions	€3,747
The Border Midland and Western Regional Assembly	<u>€123,172</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>€281,196</u>

INFORMATION SERVICES

The Draft Revenue Budget for 2009 includes a provision of €78,287 expenditure under this heading.

The Communications Officer has a co-ordinating and advisory role in relation to the following:

- Requests under the Freedom of Information Act 1997 - 2003
- Complaints received from the Office of the Ombudsman
- Public relations activity, and specifically, acting as the first point of contact for the media with the Council, liaising with Council staff in relation to media queries, issue of Press Releases
- Working closely with Information Services and other staff in maintaining the website for Donegal County Council.
- Preparation of the Council's Annual Report

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

29 requests were received under the Freedom of Information Act to the end of November 2008.

To ensure that the Freedom of Information Act is implemented in a consistent and effective manner, and to take account of staff changes as well as emerging case law, a review and update of decision makers and internal reviewers was carried out during the year.

OMBUDSMAN

The Office of the Ombudsman was set up in 1984 to investigate complaints from members of the public who feel they have been unfairly treated by certain public bodies. The Ombudsman has extensive powers and can legally demand any information, document or file from a body against which a complaint has been made and any official to give information about a complaint. The complaints generally are in relation to administrative procedures and include:

- Reasons for decisions made
- Refusal or failure to take action
- Failure to respond to the public

The Communications Officer acts as a Liaison Officer, and the first point of contact, between the Office of the Ombudsman and the Council. She ensures that any written or oral enquiries from the Ombudsman's Office

are immediately directed to the appropriate section(s) of the Council and that all time limits applying to requests for information, or for responses to complaints, from the Ombudsman's Office are met.

6 new complaints were received from the Ombudsman as at 30th November, 2008. Of these, 1 was subsequently withdrawn and 3 have been investigated and the files closed - leaving a balance of 2 ongoing. From 2007 to date, following an all-out effort by staff concerned, 28 cases have been finalised and closed by the Ombudsman. Currently, there are 21 live cases on hand.

Time limits for dealing with complaints from the Ombudsman were introduced in July 2007 as follows: -

- A reply to an initial request from the Ombudsman's for a report on a complaint should be furnished within 4 weeks from the date of the request.
- If a reply has not been received a reminder will issue giving the Council two further weeks to reply.
- In the event that a reply has still not been received a final reminder will issue.
- This reminder will give the Council two weeks to reply and will inform the Council that (a) a notice under Section 7(1)(a) of the Ombudsman Act will issue if the report is not received within that time and (b) a copy of the Section 7 notice will also be sent to the County Manager. A reply to any subsequent request for material or additional information should be furnished within three weeks of the date of request from the Ombudsman's Office.

**SUPPORT SERVICES/CENTRAL MANAGEMENT CHARGE
SEIRBHÍSÍ TACAÍOCHTA**

Budgeted Expenditure: €13,967,105

Budgeted Income: € 3,204,201

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SUPERANNUATION

The Draft Revenue Budget for 2009 includes a provision of €5,457,800 in expenditure under this heading.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Integrated Human Resources, Payroll & Superannuation System

Donegal is one of three local authorities with responsibility for piloting the Integrated HR, Payroll & Superannuation System in the Local Government Sector. This is a major project and to date, a total of 27 local authorities have committed to the System. The following schedule details the roll out order to the respective Local Authorities.

Pilot Sites	Validation Sites	Wave 1 Sites	Wave 2 Sites	Wave 3 Sites	Wave 4 Sites
Donegal	Sligo	Cavan	Offaly	Waterford CC	Clare
Kerry	Limerick	Galway City	Waterford City	Limerick City	Carlow
Meath	W.Meath	Laois	Kildare	North Tipperary	Leitrim
		Longford	Kilkenny	Galway	South Tipperary
		Louth	Wicklow	Monaghan	Roscommon
					Mayo

Given the scale of the project and for implementation purposes, the System modules have been split into two phases as follows:

Phase One Modules	Phase Two Modules
Organisational Structure & Departmental Returns	Training
Recruitment	Performance Management Development System (PMDS)
Leave, Time & Attendance	Health & Safety
Payroll	Identification, Access & Security
Superannuation	Industrial Relations, Ethics, Regulatory Compliance

Based on current Project Plans, Donegal is delivering on its Project Milestones, with Organisational Structure going live in November 2008 and the Recruitment module scheduled to go live shortly thereafter. In 2009, the objective is to ensure the Payroll, Leave, Time & Attendance and Superannuation modules are fully and successfully implemented. At this stage, it is anticipated, implementation of the Phase Two modules will commence in the last quarter of 2009.

A Benefits Realisation Report has been developed to benchmark and measure the benefits that will accrue from this Integrated Package. In addition and importantly a robust Governance Structure has been put in place to oversee the management and implementation of the Project.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The roll-out of the Performance Management Development System (PMDS) to all Directorates and Town Councils was completed during 2008. The implementation of the system has greatly strengthened the training function within Donegal County Council and it is hoped that this will be strengthened further by the implementation of the new HR, Payroll and Superannuation System in 2009.

As in previous years the provision of Statutory Health and Safety training was given a high priority, this included training courses in Plant Operation, Safe Pass, Manual Handling, Confined Spaces and Signing, Lighting and Guardian at Roadworks (SLG) to name but a few. The SLG course was given a particularly high priority due to the fact that all relevant staff are

required to be trained by July 2009, the programme to date has proven to be very successful, and a large part of this success can be attributed to the in-house trainers who not only have delivered the course to a very high standard locally but who were also instrumental in developing the programme nationally.

A comprehensive Defensive Driving Programme was delivered to all Donegal County Council drivers during 2008 and in addition 16 members of staff were provided with training to enable them to acquire a HGV licence. It is intended that this programme will continue during 2009.

The Stranorlar Regional Training Centre continued to be a valuable resource in terms of training provision during the year. The full time Trainer who was recruited at the end of 2007 has made a significant impact in terms of the range of courses now being made available through the centre and has allowed for a great deal of flexibility and adaptability in terms of scheduling courses. The Centre is self financing.

In addition to a wide range of Health and Safety courses many other courses were provided during the year including, presentation skills, customer service skills, training on procurement, interview skills training, computer training etc. The Council continued to support the further education of Staff Members through the Staff Education Scheme, this Scheme was heavily subscribed during 2008 and a wide range of courses were undertaken by Staff which included the Certificate, Diploma and Degree in Local Government Studies.

A total of €319,843 has been provided for Training and Development, including salary costs in the Draft Revenue Budget for 2009. In addition a provision of €625,000 has been made in respect of the Stranorlar Regional Training Centre, which is funded by the training fees paid in respect of the various courses delivered.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Our Safety Management System continued to be strengthened during 2008. Our proactive management of our risks has resulted in those risks being much more effectively controlled during 2008. Our incident reporting system has demonstrated a marked reduction in serious incidents during 2008. The past year has also seen much improved staff consultation arrangements put in place. New Safe System of Work Plans are being rolled out to all outdoor staff and the safety team are providing training in their use.

The plans are completed prior to each work activity and ensure that all foreseeable hazards are quantified and controlled before work begins. The plans encourage a culture of seeing the safe way as the right way and of doing the work right, first time, every time.

Donegal County Council Safety Advisors have been involved in a number of groups at national level under the auspices of the Local Authority Safety Advisors Group.

New challenges in terms of ensuring the competence of our staff by providing new statutory training have arisen during 2008. These requirements will have a significant impact on our workload in 2009.

The effort to provide a robust safety management system that clearly demonstrates management's commitment to protecting our staff and the public we serve will continue in 2009.

A provision of €191,881 is included in the Draft Revenue Budget for 2009 under this heading for this Directorate

THE NEW SAFETY COMMITTEE

Donegal Local Authorities recognises that consultation with all employees is an integral part of our safety management system. It enables employees & supervisors to discuss safety matters and identify and control hazards associated with work activities.

Employees may select from their numbers Safety Representatives to represent them on Safety and Health matters. Donegal Local Authorities facilitated the election of a new Safety Representative Committee towards the end of 2007, with the new Committee being returned in early 2008. The new committee replaces the existing committee that has been in place for three years now. A number of additional positions have been sanctioned by the Central Safety Committee to bring the total number of representatives from 11 to 23. This will allow each directorate to have a Representative within each electoral area to represent staff, to act as ambassadors for good safety practice on the ground and feedback comments and advice to management. Representatives also carry out inspections, audits and accident investigations on behalf of the Council.

The consultation arrangements are outlined under section 26 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005. Every employer is required to consult their staff members on Safety and Health matters. Consultation will cover the following issues:

1. Any measure proposed to be taken in the workplace that may substantially affect the safety, health and welfare of staff members.
2. New Procedures to be put in place.
3. The introduction of new Legislation.
4. The introduction of new Technologies.
5. Contents of the Safety Statement and risk assessments undertaken.

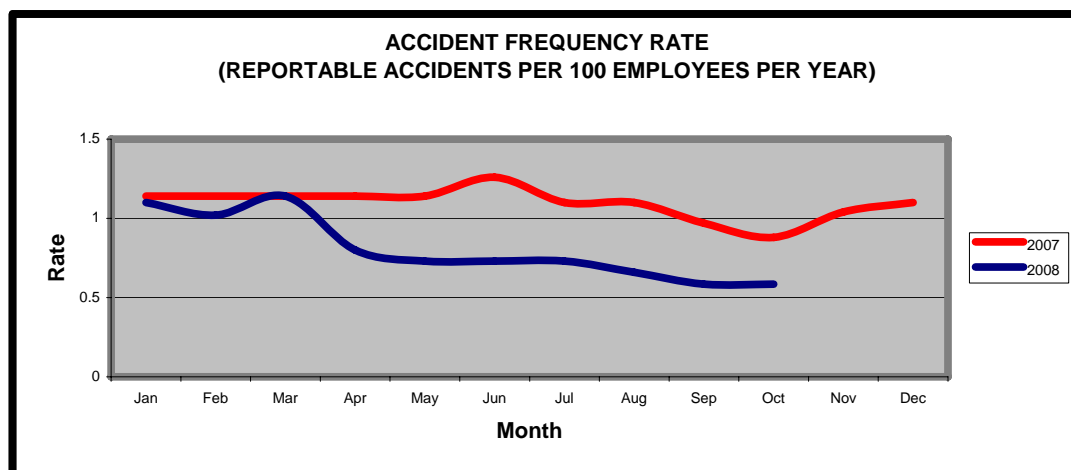
A number of Safety Team Working Groups have been established in the various directorates that focus on particular issues.

INCIDENT REPORTING SYSTEM

In 2007 the Council implemented a Council-wide incident reporting system that allows staff to report incidents, accidents and near-misses to a central database. The system allows the measurement of current incident rates in a consistent, coherent and coordinated way. The information on accidents can then be used to investigate control strategies.

76 incidents were reported using the system during 2007, 15 of these incidents were serious enough to require notification to the Health & Safety Authority. To date (November) 80 incidents have been reported in 2008. Of these 4 have been reportable to the Health & Safety Authority.

The graph below outlines the reduction in serious incidents that has been achieved during 2008.



NEW FÁS TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR 2009

From the 6th July 2009 individuals working in any of the following occupational categories will be legally required to hold a FÁS CSCS Registration Card.

1. Mobile Tower Scaffold
2. Shotfiring
3. Signing, Lighting and Guarding on Roads
4. Locating Underground Services

This requirement has placed a significant training burden on the Council. The Signing, Lighting and Guarding on Roads training course is especially demanding. The course takes 3 days to complete, requires two trainers and is restricted to a maximum of 8 learners. A significant number of Council staff require the Signing, Lighting and Guarding on Roads and the Locating Underground Services CSCS qualification. The Safety Advisors have been recognised by FÁS as competent to provide the training and a programme of targeted training focusing on key individuals has been prepared. Providing the training in-house is significantly more cost effective than contracting in Private Trainers.

SAFETY DOCUMENTATION

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 sets out the documentation that an employer must prepare, maintain and review regularly. The ongoing root and branch review programme to update all current safety documentation, policies and procedures continued in 2008.

During the year the following documents were prepared in-house;

- Safety Statement for Housing, Social & Building Services
- Safety Statement for Roads, Marine & Machinery Yard
- Safety Statement for Information Services
- Safety Statement for Donegal Town Public Service Centre
- The "Green Folder" Safety Management Manual for Roads Service was reviewed, updated and re-issued
- Safety Management Policy on the Safe Management of Construction
- Safety Management Policy on Hazard Identification & Risk Assessment
- Draft "Blue Folder" Safety Management Manual for Water Service
- Draft "Red Folder" Safety Management Manual for Fire Service
- Draft "Yellow Folder" Safety Management Manual for Housing Service
- Draft Safety Management Policy on Stress
- Draft Safety Management Policy on Lone Working
- A report on the outcome of the work related stress questionnaire within the Council was prepared and presented to Partnership.

STAFF WELFARE

In the Draft Revenue Budget for 2009, €108,007 is included for the above heading.

During 2008 the services of the Staff Welfare Officer were extensively utilised by employees from all departments of the County Council. A wide range of issues were raised including leave entitlements, superannuation and pensions, illness and bereavement, and queries of a more personal nature, both work and home related.

Occupational health nurses from Quinn Healthcare again carried out Health Screening for members of staff at Council headquarters and at each of the Public Services Centres and due to its success it is intended to continue this programme in 2009.

The annual Ecumenical Service in remembrance of deceased Members and staff of Donegal Local Authorities was very well attended in November, 2008 and this Service will take place again in November 2009.

The dedicated open access Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) which is at present being provided by Quinn Healthcare has proved successful and offers a valuable support and counselling service to employees who may be experiencing difficulties such as marital, family, relationships, depression, alcohol, substance abuse, financial, etc. This programme will be continued into 2009.

WORKPLACE PARTNERSHIP

In the Draft Revenue Budget for 2009, €88,422 is included for the above heading.

The key principles that inform and drive the need for change in the Public Service are:

- Quality in the delivery of services;
- The effective management of performance at all levels;
- Flexibility in the development of resources;
- Training and development;
- The effective use of information technology and
- An open, participative approach by all concerned.

The management of Donegal County Council, its employees and their employee representatives have pledged their collective commitment to the Partnership approach to change.

HANDLING SIGNIFICANT CHANGE THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

The County Partnership Committee and Area Partnerships will continue to mainstream the principles set out in HSCTP in 2009 and apply them to our work programme. As with the *Sustaining Progress* Action Plan, our collectively agreed commitments under the *Towards 2016* National Agreement and LANPAG's related Strategy 2007-2011 will determine our work programme for 2009 and indeed beyond.

These commitments will also be reflected in the continuing work of the Area Partnerships and the Fire Service Partnership.

The partners consider that the methodology put forward in *Handling Significant Change Through Partnership* will be fundamental in the challenges faced by the organisation in a different economic climate. The most immediate issues going into 2009 are indeed significant to the collective partners, and are foremost in our 2009 agenda:

- Efficiency/productivity improvements
- Increased flexibility
- Customer service

Expenditure in 2009 will naturally be geared towards further deepening the partnership ethos with particular emphasis on achieving improved customer service for the citizens of County Donegal and taking collective ownership of the challenges faced by Donegal Local Authorities in 2009.

CUSTOMER SERVICES PROVISION FROM PUBLIC SERVICE CENTRES

The schedule of customer contacts and activity in the area of cash receipting for 2007 and projections for 2008 are set out hereunder for comparison purposes. The data excludes customers for Motor Tax and related services, which is detailed separately in this report.

2007 Schedule

	Donegal	Dungloe	Carndonagh	Letterkenny	Milford	Total
In Person	8604	11381	9720	8906	4922	43533
By Telephone	33728	29115	34970	39601	22248	159662
No. of Receipts	6978	4650	5515	6913	4023	28079
Value €m	€5.297	€2.441	€4.078	€5.406	€1.893	€19.115

2008 Schedule (Projected)

	Donegal	Dungloe	Carndonagh	Letterkenny	Milford	Total
In Person	9911	16027	9280	9459	4777	49454
By Telephone	36602	32187	34843	37775	19238	160645
No. of Receipts	6953	4642	5461	7388	3377	27821
Value €m	€4.458	€2.488	€2.899	€5.721	€1.295	€16.861

There continues to be a year on year increase in customer contacts. Personal callers are up by 13.6%. Telephone contacts are at a similar level to 2007.

The Council is continually reviewing the potential of technology to enhance service provision and provide access to information for customers through our website, e.g. on-line planning, on-line access to the electoral register, on-line payments - parking fines. Preliminary work has been completed to have on line payment facilities more widely available to customers subject to a review of the overall cost implications and of existing arrangements for the collection of income due to the Council.

DEVELOPMENT OF OUTREACH SERVICES

It was noted in the 2007 Budget proposal that it was intended to develop the provision of outreach County Council services in the Inishowen Electoral Area through Bunrana Town Council. Initial discussions have taken place with the Town Manager and Town Clerk to advance this based on experience in Ballyshannon and following discussions with the Town Council Members and with the Inishowen Electoral Area Committee it was agreed to include a provision for the County Council customers to pay a bill in the Town Council offices. Preparatory work is well advanced to enable these services, including a facility to pay bills, to be available early in 2009.

INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The Draft Revenue Budget for 2009 includes a provision of €3,133,424 for this heading.

INTRODUCTION

Implementation of the Council's Information Systems Strategic Plan 2006-2009 continued during 2008. Work ranged from network expansion and maintenance to systems development and implementation as well as the progression of broadband and information society strategies and projects. Opportunities across a wide range of technologies are now routinely explored and exploited for the benefit of Council staff and members as well as the general public.

The importance of Broadband and advanced telecommunications services continues to develop particularly for rural and peripheral regions like Donegal. The Information Systems Department has taken responsibility for promoting the broadband agenda in the county and is currently managing the Metropolitan Area Networks programme as well as a number of complimentary projects aimed at improving the provision of broadband services in both urban and rural parts of the county.

A comprehensive report on broadband development was included in the Capital Programme Budget report.

TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE & NETWORKS

Donegal County Council's technology infrastructure currently services 72 Council locations countywide. The infrastructure comprises 84 various Servers, 1,334 Desktop and Laptop computers together with printers. 42 servers sit on the Local Area Network at Headquarters with the other 42 servers located on various office networks throughout the county. 17 PABX Telephone systems and 940 telephone handsets are integrated into the County network and are supported on an on-going basis. This infrastructure represents many years of investment and is amongst the largest Local Authority Networks in Ireland. Substantial effort is involved in maintaining the entire ICT infrastructure as well as managing the Council's information and data repositories.

During 2008 a major upgrade of the Council's e-mail system was completed as well as an upgrade of the network operating systems. Enhanced remote email facilities have been installed on a pilot basis. Hardware for the new National HR system has been installed and commissioned. A process of encrypting laptops commenced in 2008 to reduce the risk of data loss.

Expansion of the ICT network continued in 2008 with the addition of a number of sites including the new Civil Defence Office in Stranorlar, Dungloe and Carndonagh Fire Stations, Killybegs Library and the new Laboratory in Letterkenny. In conjunction with this expansion, upgrades were made to telecommunications links serving the Central Library and the Veterinary Office to improve speeds and reduce running costs. A major upgrade to national government telecommunications networks was carried out during 2008. This upgrade will facilitate additional inter-agency services, provide faster web access speeds and improve speeds on the overall network. A number of upgrades took place on existing PABX Phone systems during the year and a new system was added in the Council's Laboratory.

INTER-AGENCY CO-OPERATION

The Information Systems Department continued to provide the Citizens Information Units in the Public Services Centres with access to the Comhairle network for information uploads via the Council's Government Internet connection. In conjunction with this service, secure inter-agency connections were maintained between the Council's networks and Department of Social Community & Family Affairs systems. The Information Systems Department provides Internet facilities to FAS, Department of Social Community & Family Affairs, Citizens Information Units and the National Roads Design Office in various Public Service Centres throughout the county.

Support for PABX telephone systems and handsets is also being provided to DSCFA, HSE, NRDO, MABS, CIU Teagasc and FAS. The inter-agency service provision has required much collaborative work to facilitate the different requirements of each agency and ensure integration with the Council's infrastructure.

The use of mobile technology continues to evolve annually with a range of Council staff including Traffic Wardens, Revenue Collectors and Plant Operatives routinely using mobile handheld technology in the course of their work.

SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION

The systems programme is quite extensive and diverse. Information is set out hereunder in relation to some selected projects which may be of interest to members.

PUBLIC SERVICE LICENSE SYSTEM

This system was developed internally to process Public Service Licenses (applications for road openings, water connections and sewer openings) and has now been implemented countywide. It will lead to more efficient processing of service connection applications as well as improved management reporting facilities. It complements the suite of systems used to manage the non-domestic water-metering project.

PLANNING RATIOS SYSTEM

The Planning Ratios System was developed and implemented in 2008 to assist planning staff to manage the ratios in different areas between holiday homes and permanent homes as required by the County Development Plan.

FUNDING APPLICATION SYSTEM

A Funding Application System has been developed which is used to view and track projects which are assisted by external funding. This in turn assists the services to target specific external funding opportunities for a wide range of projects within the Council.

MAJOR EMERGENCY PLAN EXTRANET

An extranet has been developed which is accessible online to members from each of the six organisations represented on the Northwest Regional Major Emergency Steering Group and Regional Working Group. This extranet will be used for information sharing and document collaboration relating to major emergency planning for the North West region.

HUMAN RESOURCES PAYROLL AND SUPERANNUATION

Donegal County Council is one of three national pilot sites for a major Human Resources system implementation. During 2008 the server architecture has been commissioned and a significant amount of work in the areas of data capture, verification and migration has been carried out. To facilitate the migration of employee information to the new module a system was developed locally to capture service details.

Donegal worked closely with the Local Government Computer Services Board in developing a national Central Data Repository system, which will be used countrywide for data capture purposes as the system is implemented in other Local Authorities.

COUNCIL WEBSITE www.donegal.ie

Work on the Council's website continued during 2008. Content is updated on a regular basis to inform the public on the progress of projects, Council sponsored events, jobs, and others services of interest. On-Line Planning continues to be the most accessed service. 2008 also saw the addition of web casting to the website when a major road safety conference held in Letterkenny during May was broadcast live on the site. Archived material from the conference is still available for viewing.

ON-LINE PLANNING

The Council integrated on-line planning enquiry system continues to grow in popularity with the public as evidenced with increased usage figures again in 2008. On Line Planning received further national recognition in 2008 when it was shortlisted in the External Communications category at the Local Authority Members Awards.

This award is in addition to previous recognition at national level when the e-planning system was adjudged the best government to citizen application at the Inside Government Innovation through technology awards 2006 and the Chambers Ireland Excellence in Local Government Awards 2007 (planning services). The Council's work was also selected as an example of European e-Government best practice and was showcased with 50 other systems at a major European Commission e-Government conference and awards ceremony in Lisbon Portugal.

The e-planning system allows members of the public to access all details of planning applications over the Internet using a combination of database, document management and geographic information systems technology. A pre-planning module also allows prospective applicants to ascertain the likelihood of obtaining planning permission for a particular site using GIS technology. The E-Planning system has been extended to Town Council's as part of the development of Town Council websites.

MEMBERS EXTRANET

This secure website has been developed to provide Council Members with access to a data repository of interest to them. It is populated with agendas and minutes relating to Council and Committee meetings. It is also used to run electronic based meetings at electoral area and is now being extended to cater for General Purposes Committee meetings. The system will reduce the volume of paper created in the conduct of meetings generally and eliminate duplication of data entry. It can also be used by the Council to make the Members aware of notices, up-coming events etc.

HOUSING - HOME (iHouse)

Donegal County Council took the lead as pilot local authority for the new version of the national Housing system which was implemented in November 2008. This version of the system contained considerably improved rent review functionality. The latest version also includes provision for division of workload by Electoral Area as well as enabling efficiencies in hitherto manual processes such as succession of tenancy. A comprehensive reporting facility has also been added. Functionality is being provided that will enable the four local housing authorities to move towards a fully integrated service through sharing of housing applications and processing. This will support existing co-operative activities and eliminate duplication of effort.

The Housing Needs Assessment was facilitated entirely through the iHouse system for the first time. There were notable savings in staff time in the preparation of returns which were uploaded electronically. A systems specification has been developed for the new Housing Grants scheme.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The Council's substantial database of Geographic Information was used extensively in 2008 for a number of important projects.

As part of the Gateway Initiative Fund and Developing Areas Initiative, GIS mapping was used to identify and map potential project locations, and key geographical datasets. In conjunction with Departmental workshops, data was generated and supplied in specific formats to the Department of the Environment Heritage & Local Government Innovative GIS analysis was carried on to examine the role of neighbourhoods in Letterkenny. Methodology statements and maps were produced for the project.

In May 2008, Donegal County Council in conjunction with Ordnance Survey Ireland launched the Mapshop Agency located in the Letterkenny Public Service Centre.

The agency supplies both paper and digital maps to customers for planning applications, land transfers, legal applications, historic maps and ESB connections. The introduction of this service to the Northwest has been very successful to date and well received.

The Citizenscape project commenced in January 2008. This project is an innovative EU project funded by the EU Parliament, which aims to help use emerging web 2.0 technologies to explain Environmental legislation to the citizens. Donegal County Council hosted a successful project meeting in June and services will be rolled out during 2009.

Due to the changed economic circumstances it is evident that in future greater outputs will be required with less resources. The Council must realize greater efficiencies in its work processes and adopt improved working methods. Information Technology and Information Systems are key enablers in this regard. During 2009 and beyond the Information Systems Department will propose and implement enhancements targeting operational efficiencies and improved customer services. In that context key projects to be developed and implemented in 2009 include the following:

- Expanded Web based e-Government services.
- Integrated Human Resources Payroll and Superannuation system
- Document Management Expansion
- Electronic Consultation for public policy matters
- Extension of Electronic payments
- New library management system
- Managing Council Business - phase 2
- Network and general ICT infrastructural upgrades
- Mobile working

ERNACT - INFORMATION Society Initiatives

Through participation in the ERNACT (www.ernact.net) network since its foundation in 1990, Donegal County Council has been involved in a range of European, Interregional, as well as cross border public sector Information Society technology projects. This involvement enables the Council to access EU funding for technology projects within the County. ERNACT owned by Donegal County Council and Derry City Council has now evolved into a EU network of excellence for developing and implementing ICT-based models of regional development. ERNACT comprises a total of 7 core regions - Galway, Donegal and Derry in Ireland, Wirral in England, Zeeland in The Netherlands, San Sebastian and Cantabria in Spain, and Olomouc Czech Republic.

From late 2007 through the first quarter of 2008, the IS Department was engaged in preparatory work with ERNACT partners developing proposals for funding under the Inter-Reg and Northern Periphery Programmes. At this stage two project proposals have been approved by the EU Commission.

PROMOTING INNOVATION IN THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY (PIKE)

Donegal County Council participates in the Interreg-funded PIKE project along with European local/regional authority partners: Galway County Council, Derry City Council, Vasternorrland (Sweden), Regional Authority of Olomouc (Czech Republic), Comune di Bologna (Italy), EMCANTA Cantabria (Spain), Burgas (Bulgaria) and Sterea Ellada (Greece).

The PIKE project focuses on the exchange of best practice in eGovernment projects between regions. Donegal County Council's Online Planning System has been identified as one such good practice. As the project also links closely with national authorities, such as the BMW Regional Assembly, significant emphasis is placed on enabling the Council to explore opportunities for project development and funding under the Regional Programmes. The PIKE project is funded under Interreg IVC and runs for two years.

CONNECTING MOBILE COMMUNITIES IN THE NORTHERN PERIPHERY (CMC@NPP)

Donegal County Council participates in the CMC@NPP project funded under the Northern Periphery Programme with partners: ERNACT, Vasternorrland (Sweden), North Karelia (Finland), San Sebastian (Spain), Western Isles (Scotland), and Derry City Council. The project will focus on developing and implementing innovative services that use mobile technology to capitalize on the availability of broadband. The [CMC@NPP](#) project is funded under the Northern Periphery Programme and runs for two years.