

Foreword

At the core of Donegal County Development Board's Integrated Development Strategy (*An Straitéis, 2002 – 2012*), is a vision to create *'vibrant communities which participate fully in the life of Donegal'*.

It was recognised by the community and voluntary sector, that in order to achieve this vision, it would be necessary to develop appropriate strategies that could respond to the real needs of the community and voluntary sector. However, there appeared to be a lack of any evidence based research of what these real needs were and the extent to which community development activity is taking place within the county, both sectorally and geographically.

In responding to these challenges the Research and Policy Unit of Donegal County Council set about to develop a new framework that would not only identify existing Community Infrastructure but would also examine its accessibility. This resulted in the production of the *'Donegal Community Audit'*, which in its entirety includes a set of community infrastructure maps, two community and voluntary directories and this strategic needs assessment.

In addition, the framework developed is flexible to adapt to changes within this dynamic sector and enable additional pieces of community and social infrastructure to be added over time.

The comprehensiveness of this strategic needs assessment is testimony to the hard work and dedication of the Research and Policy Unit, a number of community based researchers and to the cooperation received in this process from the community sector.

I am confident that we have taken a significant step forward to understanding the needs of the community and voluntary sector and ultimately closer to fulfilling the above vision as outlined in the Community Development Sectoral Plan. The challenge now is for all of the key players and stakeholders within the community and voluntary sector, to examine the locational and sectoral specific needs in conjunction with the needs as identified by the communities themselves and to respond accordingly through the development of collaborative and innovative actions and strategies.

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