

News and Events

Carbery Housing Association secures first properties for "persons locked out of the housing market".

Carbery Housing Association (CHA) is a community-based housing association, set up by local residents in West Cork in 2001 to provide affordable housing options within a community framework, for single people and families "locked out of the housing market". Carbery Housing Association is a non-profit company with charitable status, and has Approved Housing Body status from the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG).

From 2001 to 2008 CHA made a number of proposals for the building of sustainable social housing in West Cork. These proposals, unfortunately, did not secure Local Authority support, so never materialised. In 2009, as a result of the implosion of the "housing bubble", many thousands of privately owned houses were left empty and unsold. Due to this development, CHA changed strategy, to concentrate on promoting and negotiating for use of empty properties, primarily making use of the Government's new private sector leasing scheme for social housing (SHIP).

The SHIP scheme is funded by Central Government and involves offering private owners of suitable properties 80% of the market rent (as set by a property valuer) in exchange for full repairing leases (10-20 years) between the owner and an Approved Housing Body (such as CHA). The lease rent is then paid by the DECLG quarterly to the Housing Association, who in turn pays it to the owner, as set out by a Lease between the two. The Association then rents the property to an eligible tenant nominated by the Council, and collects a weekly affordable rent set on the same basis as Council rents, which pay for management and maintenance costs.

CHA began to promote this scheme in 2009, both to private owners and the Local Authorities. To date we have identified and inspected over 30 Local Authority and privately owned properties that could be suitable for the scheme in the West Cork region. Negotiations for seven of these have materialised into concrete offers and have been fully surveyed and applications for funding approval made to the Department of Environment, Communities and Local Government (DECLG). Out of these, six properties have also been inspected by Cork County Council's Housing Department (Private Leasing Unit) as part of the approval process, as they must meet the stringent standards required for letting to Council applicants.

On December 28th 2011, the DECLG formally approved funding for the first three properties, all situated in Main Street, Drimoleague. This means that the Association, the owners and Cork Council have the "green light" to proceed with the pilot community housing project. The three properties are owned by local builder and developer Pat Keohane, who is strongly supportive of the scheme, and will be leased to CHA for a period of 20 years. The properties will provide five separate housing units, 1x 3 bedroom family maisonette, 3x 2 bedroom and 1x 1 bedroom apartments for single persons and couples. Tenants will pay the equivalent of a Council house rent for the period of the lease, which will go towards paying CHA's management and

maintenance costs.

CHA is a membership organisation, with an Executive Committee elected from the membership. Tenants, as well as other members of the community, may join CHA as members, subject to payment of a small membership fee and approval by the Executive Committee. After this they may participate fully in the work of the Association and stand for election to the Executive Committee if they choose. CHA also keep a housing list of prospective tenants who are interested in long-term lets. The properties will be managed and maintained by Carbery Housing Association. Prospective tenants will be nominated by Cork County Council from its Housing List. CHA intends to organize a number of social and raining activities for its tenants, on the basis of social economy and co-operative development, and making use of local talent and resources.

Negotiations are on-going for a further privately owned and Local Authority owned unsold affordable houses. However, progress is slow and the process of approval time-consuming. But CHA is optimistic that, given the large numbers of empty properties and the potential benefits of the scheme, owners and Local Authorities will see the sense of making over more empty homes and other buildings to such initiatives, so that they can be constructively used for greater community benefit. In this way, we can actually begin to turn the crisis into an opportunity for community endeavour and self-help. If you have an empty property and would like to find out about private sector leasing, please contact Jose Ospina, Secretary, CHA, on 086 8224429, or visit our web page on www.carberyhousing.eu, which includes Housing Application forms and a section on Private Sector Leasing, as well as e-mail details.

Petition to defend Cooperatives

Cooperatives Europe has launched a petition to defend the cooperative enterprise model, a system based on the principles of democratic control, self-responsibility, equity and solidarity. These values are being challenged by the private interests of a restricted group of large profit oriented companies, attacking the legitimacy of this specific model at the European Commission. If you believe that some attention has to be paid to the social and human dimension in economic activities and that a strong political message needs to be given, please read and sign the following petition, and disseminate it as much as possible. We invite you to visit the website :

<http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/hands-off-our-coops.html>

Cork City and County Welcome Social Enterprises and Entrepreneurs.

One Day Seminar - Social Enterprises and Social Entrepreneurs in Cork

Organised by the West Cork DESEO Partnership

Jury's Hotel, Great Western Road, Cork City, Monday 26th of November 2007

This seminal event provided an opportunity for Social Enterprises to 'come out of the closet' and highlight their achievements, their potential, and the support they require to do more to "humanise the Celtic Tiger". The event is the first to focus specifically on Social Enterprise, if not nationally certainly in County Cork. DESEO stands for "Development of Equal Opportunities in Social Economy Territories". It is a trans-national European Project involving 8 European regions, in Sweden, France, Italy, Spain and Ireland. The Irish partners are a Cork social partnership made up of the County Development Board, the West Cork LEADER Co-op, Clann Credo (Social Investment Fund), Cork Environment Forum and Carbery Housing Association. CHA (who are also Board members of the REVES Network) instigated and co-ordinate the Partnership.

The Seminar was attended by around 55 persons, mostly delegates from local social enterprises, development agencies, business support agencies, environmental groups and university departments, as well as representatives of local and national government. Chairing the event were, Bob Seward from Cork Academy of Music, and Evelyn Grant from Cork Music Works, both award-winning social entrepreneurs.

Cllr. Terry Shannon, Deputy Lord Mayor of Cork, welcomed those attending, and hoped the event would demonstrate what social enterprises are doing to redress social balance in the City. Growth experienced under the Celtic Tiger had brought wealth to many, and this was welcome, but other had been left behind and social enterprises were needed to help these communities.

Sen. Dan Boyle, Vice Chairman of Seanad Éireann, and first speaker of the day, recalled his long work experience in the social enterprise and community sector. He agreed that many good initiatives were not receiving the

support they needed, even though their work was essential, and that many public initiatives in this area had been misconceived. This had to change and he was committed to helping this change.

Patrick McManus, Manager of the Derry-based Social Enterprise Agency provided a comprehensive explanation of the definition of social enterprises, the social economy and the third sector, all being names for the range of enterprises that deliver services and products with primarily social, environmental or cultural objectives. He described innovative programmes for support of these enterprises taking place, on the basis of north-south co-operation, in the Border counties.

Majella

Ní Chríocháin, Manager of the Irish Islands Federation spoke about the work of her organisation in supporting island communities around the Irish Coast, from Aran to Cork. Comhdáil had been set up by the communities themselves, and provides LEADER funds to support the social enterprises on which they relied to meet needs as diverse as transport childcare and renewable energy provision.

Lisa Cashman, Development Officer for West Cork LEADER Co-operative, then explained the vital work developed by the Co-operative in supporting rural development in the region, through the LEADER and the Rural Social Scheme, as well as other Programmes. She highlighted a number of social enterprises that the agency has supported to date, including: Allihies Parish Co-operative Society Ltd, Mizen Tourism Co-operative Society Ltd, Irish Natural Forestry Foundation, Cork Environmental Forum and Co-Action Beara Preserves.

José Ospina, Secretary of Carbery Housing Association, then elaborated on how social housing associations aim to assist the Council is providing housing for persons locked out of the market, particularly single people. Cork County Council's research has demonstrated that up to 48% of new households on the Cork coast cannot afford to buy or rent housing on the market without subsidy. CHA had made proposals to the County for the development of sustainable social housing by the Association, but these have not been supported. He pleaded for greater co-operation between the Council and the voluntary sector.

Robert Lee, a local Ceramicist and officer of the West Cork Craft and Design Guild, illustrated the demanding standards that the Guild requires of its members, and their commitment to quality design and production. As a result, local Crafts are recognised locally and internationally for their excellence. The Guild is a mutual aid organisation that supports individual craftspeople through publicity and marketing, advocacy and training. The Guild is currently celebrating its 10th Anniversary, and looking to develop permanent premises with exhibition, retail and workshop and restaurant space.

Lynda Stopford, Network Director of Social Entrepreneurs Ireland, a national organisation based in Dublin, explained how SEI grants from private donors totalling € 2.1 million to 85 social entrepreneurs around the country, many of these in Cork City and County. SEI has the mission of identifying and supporting more social entrepreneurs, who can prove that their initiatives can change Ireland for the better. They will be looking for a further wave of Social Entrepreneurs in early 2008.

Tania

Zhinzhina, who relocated with her family from Russia some time ago, explained how she decided to set up and is now Editor of The Immigrant Newspaper, a monthly free paper, aimed at keeping new communities informed, and helping local communities understand and integrate their new arrivals. The paper is distributed widely thanks to the support of many volunteers. Given the success of the paper in Cork, Tania is aiming to "go national" in the future.

Louise Oppermann, the Facilitator of the Community Timebank project based in Glounthaune Village, explained how the Timebank invites local people to contribute skills and time to a variety of community endeavours. This contribution is "banked", and then repaid to the "investor" in terms of other voluntary work or products, provided by other investors. The Timebank scheme had revitalised mutual aid in the village, helped people to get involved with their locality, and is now being replicated in other areas.

In the

final session of the seminar Cllr. Tom Sheahan, Mayor of Cork County, chaired a panel drawing conclusions from the Seminar. Cllr. Sheahan also drew on his own sector experience as Chair of the County Development Board, founder member of the Avondu Development Group and Chair of Blackwater Resource Development, another LEADER Group in North Cork.

The

Mayor concluded by saying that economic growth alone was not sufficient to meet the region's integral needs. Social enterprises could save the public purse and the taxpayer a lot of money, by preventing social exclusion and making communities sustainable.

Katherine Walshe, Director of

Services explained how partnership between the County and social enterprises was working well in some areas, and this should be an example to other areas where it wasn't. Jim Boyle, Finance Director of Clann Credo (a social investment fund) felt that the private sector had much to offer social enterprises in terms of expertise and resources, and channels (like the RISE Project in the Border counties, that they are Partners in) were needed to direct this support where it can be of most use.

The Seminar concluded with a commitment by the social enterprises present, to expand and consolidate the present gathering into a Cork County network. Also, to make a submission to the forthcoming Cork County Development Plan review asking for more comprehensive support for social enterprises. The Seminar also asked that Cork County, City and Town Councils consider improved structures for this purpose, on the par with those made available to private enterprises, and in line with the pioneering initiatives identified in the Border counties. Also to consider co-operation with the REVES Network and with other European regions in this field, through exchange projects like DESEO.

The Seminar concluded with a wine reception and music provided by the Cork Academy of Music.

For further information, and for a CD-ROM of the Seminar presentations, contact José Ospina, Project Manager, Carbery Housing Association, Tel 028 21890 or e-mail jose@carberyhousing.eu

The attached Report on Strategic Integration of Social Enterprises was sent to Cork County Council following the completion of the DESEO Project.

European Partnership Project on Social Economy Clustering approved by European Commission.

A new Partnership, led by the REVES (Cities and Regions of the Social Economy) Network, and including Carbery Housing Association, has been approved by the European Commission. The DESEO Project, funded under the Community Strategy on Gender Equality (VP/2005/020) aims to promote the formation of regional clusters of social economy organisations, with a special emphasis on the promotion of gender equality.

The Project includes Partners in a dozen European Regions, including the Cities of Modena, Piacenza and Messina in Italy. Also, social economy organisations in Finland, Lithuania, France, Spain and Belgium. Carbery Housing Association is the Partner for Ireland, and will be seeking to form a cluster of social economy organisations in West Cork through the Project.

Social economy organisations are non-profit enterprises that operate in the social, environmental and cultural spheres, and derive their income from commercial, public and charitable sources. CHA will be contacting a range of West Cork enterprises with a view to forming a local partnership to develop the Project.

Activities will kick off early in 2007, following an inaugural meeting to take place in Brussels in December.

If you are interested in being a Partner in this Project or finding out more, contact José Ospina, Project Manager, at jose@carberyhousing.eu.

Social Economy Network in Partnership Agreement with UN agencies.

The REVES (Cities and Regions of the Social Economy) has signed a joint working agreement with ART, a UN grouping that brings together various UN agencies in pursuit of the Millennium Goals.

The initiative is mainly aimed at developing countries, where REVES's expertise in developing local authority and social economy partnerships will be applied as part of local development programmes.

Carbery Housing Association is a Board Member of REVES.

[Click here for the full Press Release.](#)

County Development Review

Carbery Housing Association has responded to Cork County Council's request for contributions to the review of the County Development Plan.

[For a copy of this Response click here.](#)

CHA also proposed to the Review the adoption by the County Council of the Energy Efficiency Guidelines adopted by

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council.

For a copy of these guidelines, [click here](#).

Your comments on this Response and the Guidelines are welcome. Send these to: jose@carberyhousing.eu.