

Sligo County Council Annual Report
Comhairle Chontae Shligigh Tuarascáil Bhliantúil

2003



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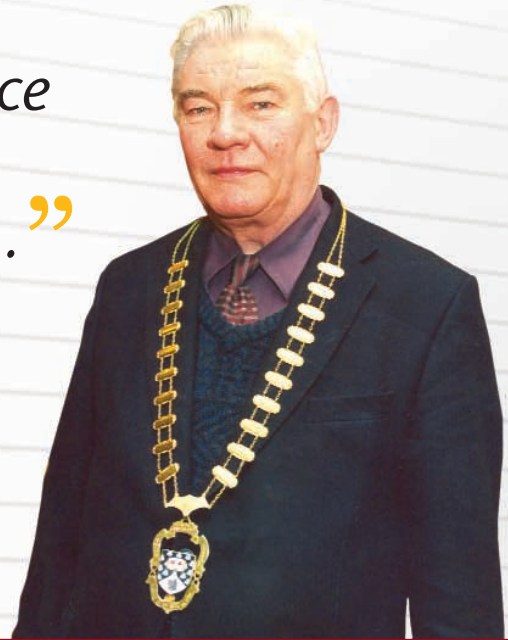
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Cathaoirleach's Introduction

“ I am pleased to introduce Sligo County Council's Annual Report for 2003. ”



It was a busy and productive year for this Authority, and there were a number of important developments across the service areas. A project that held special significance for me was the provision of a new 'one stop shop' facility in Tubbercurry. This initiative represents a substantial investment by Sligo County Council in South Sligo, and the availability of so many essential services under the one roof will be welcomed by the local community. I would like to thank the elected members and staff for their vision and commitment in delivering this valuable facility.

I had the privilege over the last year of welcoming many visitors to County Hall, including many people who excelled in their chosen sporting endeavour. I hosted receptions in 2003 for, among others, for the Sligo IT Sigerson Cup winning Team, the County Ladies Football Team and the Curry Senior Football Team, County Champions in 2003 – which I think is indicative of the progressive and vibrant state of sport in our county.

2004 will mark the end of the current Council's term. Any appraisal of the Council's performance over the last five years will confirm that this Council has served the people of Sligo well and can be proud of its record – we have overseen important developments in all the major service areas, in our continuing objective to deliver a quality service to the people of county Sligo.

Councillor Joe Cawley
Cathaoirleach

County Manager's Foreword

“2003 was an exciting year for the Council with activity levels increasing under virtually all headings as the local and wider economies pulled out of the stagnation of 2002.”



This was particularly noticeable in the area of physical planning where application numbers were almost at an all time high and enquiries indicated a renewed confidence in Sligo and the North-West.

Following on from the designation of Sligo as a 'Gateway' or major growth centre by Government in 2002 under the National Spatial Strategy, preparatory work was completed on the 'Sligo and Environs Development Plan'. This is the medium to long-term planning and land-use framework within which Sligo will develop and expand in the years ahead and its objective is to create a modern and compact city with a critical mass of population, infrastructure, services and employment that will drive and sustain the regional economy into the future. As the plan spans the area of Sligo County Council and Borough Council, it was prepared as a joint venture by the two Councils and was formally adopted by both in December.

The improvement of customer service continues to be a major objective for the Council and in 2003 a number of service improvement initiatives continued or were concluded. The most important was in September the opening for business of the 'One Stop Shop' in Tubbercurry. This facility will provide a modern branch library, a wide range of Council services and facilities for other Government agencies all under one roof and should greatly improve the responsiveness and quality of our services in South Sligo.

Modernisation and the achievement of value for money in service delivery are important and ongoing issues for the Council. During the year discussions opened with staff and unions on a major programme of modernisation under the umbrella of the Government's agreements with the Social Partners – 'Sustaining Progress' and 'Benchmarking'. These discussions, which were ongoing at year's end, offer the scope for the Council to achieve the sort of flexibility and adaptability that will be necessary to meet the challenges of service delivery in tomorrow's world.

My contract as County Manager expired in November 2003. During the year, an open competition to fill the post was conducted on behalf of the Council by the Local Appointments Commission. I presented myself as a candidate and I was successful in being reappointed by the Council for a further term of seven years. With the improvement in economic conditions over recent years, the opportunities and challenges available to the Manager and the Council are much greater than when I was first appointed in 1996. I am confident that with an excellent team of staff, good relations with communities and other agencies and a supportive Council, a great deal can be achieved on behalf of our customers, the people of Sligo, in the coming years.

Hubert Kearns

Hubert Kearns
County Manager

Council Members / Map of Electoral Area

Sligo/Drumcliffe Area Elected Members



Cllr. Padraig Branley
Fianna Fáil Elected 1999
Omra, Pearse Road, Sligo
(071) 9169454(H) / 9150600(W)
0872870584
branleypadraig@eircom.net



Cllr. Patsy Barry
Fianna Fáil Elected 1999
Grainge,
Co. Sligo
(071) 9163168 / 087 2727588
barrypatsy@eircom.net



Cllr. Ita Fox
Fine Gael Elected 1985
Colgagh, Calry, Co. Sligo
(071) 9144932 /
0872077704
foxita@eircom.net



Cllr. Brian Scanlon
Labour Elected 1999
5 Molloway Place
Sligo
(071) 9146093 / 9162774
scanlonbrian@eircom.net



Cllr. Joe Leonard
Fine Gael Elected 1985
Cloonaghbawn,
Ballinful, Co. Sligo
(071) 9163443 / 9163548
leonardjoe@eircom.net



Cllr. Jimmy Devins
Fianna Fáil Elected 1991
Mail Coach Road
Sligo
(071) 9152970
jdevins@eircom.net

*Resigned his seat on
Council September 2003*



Cllr. Seamus Kilgannon
Fianna Fáil
81 Rathedmond Estate
Sligo
(071) 9162695 /
086 8243121

*Co-opted to Sligo County
Council November 2003*

Sligo/Strandhill Area Elected Members



Cllr. Declan Bree
Labour Elected 1974
1 High Street
Sligo
(071) 9145490
dbree@eircom.net



Cllr. Albert Higgins
Fianna Fáil 1974
Carraroe
Sligo
(071) 9160129
higginsalbert@eircom.net



Cllr. Jim McGarry
Fine Gael Elected 1991
Oakfield
Sligo
(071) 9161515
mcgarryjimmy@eircom.net



Cllr. Roddy McGuinn
Fianna Fáil Elected 1999
19 Langan Drive
Sligo
(071) 9143891
mcguinnroddy@eircom.net



Cllr. Tony McLoughlin
Fine Gael Elected 1974
'Beechlaw'n',
Barnasraghy, Sligo
(071) 9160768
mcloughlintony@eircom.net



Cllr. Sean MacManus
Sinn Féin Elected 1999
9 Johnson Court
Sligo
(071) 9154040
sligosf@eircom.net



Cllr. John Perry
Fine Gael Elected 1999
Teeling Street,
Ballymote, Co. Sligo
(071) 9151011
johnperry_@oireachtas.ie

Dromore West Area Elected Members



Cllr. Mary Barrett
Fine Gael Elected 1991
Ardabrone,
Dromard, Co. Sligo
(071) 9166753
barrettmary@eircom.net



Cllr. Paul Conmy
Fine Gael Elected 1991
Meenaun,
Culleens, Co. Sligo
(096) 36499 / 086 8406330
pconmy@eircom.net



Cllr. Joseph Queenan
Fianna Fáil Elected 1999
Lacknaslieva,
Enniscrone, Co. Sligo
(096) 36449 / 087 6214422
queenanjoseph@eircom.net

Strategic Policy Committee Members

SPC 1 – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING POLICY

Cathaoirleach:- Councillor Patsy Barry, Grange, Co. Sligo

Councillor Declan Bree, 1 High Street, Sligo

Councillor Aidan Colleary, Cully, Curry, Co. Sligo

Councillor Seamus Kilgannon, 81 Rathedmond, Sligo

Councillor Sean MacManus, 5 Mountain View, Maugheraboy Sligo

Councillor Jimmy McGarry, Oakfield, Sligo

Councillor Tony McLoughlin, "Beechlawn", Barnasraghy, Co. Sligo

Mr Frankie Brannigan, c/o Courthouse, Temple Street, Sligo

Mr Michael Keenan, Coolbeg, Carraroe, Co. Sligo

Mr Gerry Healy, Sligo Chamber of Commerce, 16 Quay Street, Sligo

Mr Gregg Mullen, 26 Rosehill, Sligo

SPC 2 – ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Cathaoirleach:- Councillor Leo Conlon, Coolmurla, Geevagh, Co. Sligo

Councillor Paul Conmy, Meenaun, Culleens, Co. Sligo

Councillor Michael Fleming, Carrowreagh Cooper, Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo

Councillor Albert Higgins, Carraroe, Co. Sligo

Councillor Alfie Parke, Cloonagashel, Ballymote, Co. Sligo

Councillor John Perry, Teeling Street, Ballymote Co. Sligo

Mr Gearoid O'Connor, Cambs, Ballymote, Co. Sligo

Mr Aidan Mannion, 12 Markievicz Heights, Sligo

Mrs Sally Ward, Cregg, Rossespoint, Co. Sligo

SPC 3 – TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURAL POLICY

Cathaoirleach:- Councillor Michael Conlon, Rinnatruffane, Geevagh, Co. Sligo

Councillor Padraig Branley, "Omra", Pearse Road, Sligo

Councillor Margaret Gormley, Carrowloughlin, Bunninadden, Co. Sligo

Councillor Roddy McGuinn, 19, Langan Drive, Sligo

Councillor Gerry Murray, Calterane, Gurteen, Co. Sligo

Councillor Eamon Scanlon, Keenaghan, Ballymote, Co. Sligo

Mr Rory O'Connor, Adam Spence Europe Ltd Abbeystown, Boyle, Co Roscommon

Mrs Lillian Scanlon, Corhober, Ballymote, Co. Sligo

Mr Eunan Cunningham, Sligo Development Centre, Cleveragh Road, Co Sligo

SPC 4 – HOUSING POLICY/SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Cathaoirleach:- Councillor Joe Leonard, Cloonaghbawn, Ballinfull, Co. Sligo

Councillor Mary Barrett, Ardabrone, Dromard, Co. Sligo

Councillor P J Cawley, Emmet Street, Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo

Councillor Ita Fox, Colgagh, Calry Co. Sligo

Councillor Joseph Queenan, Lacknasllieva, Enniscrone, Co. Sligo

Councillor Brian Scanlon, 50 St. Edward's Terrace, Sligo

Mr Padraig Davey, "The Cottage", Ballure, Clogerevagh Sligo

Mrs Marian Quinn, Yeats Building, Hyde Bridge, Co Sligo

Mrs Sharon Boles, Ballintogher, Co. Sligo

Housing and Building

The Housing section of Sligo County Council provides a number of very important services, covering every aspect of social housing:

- ▶ Assisting people who are in need of housing and who cannot afford it from their own resources.
- ▶ Provision and management of traveller accommodation.
- ▶ Liaison with approved Voluntary Housing Organisations and other agencies in the provision of accommodation.
- ▶ Encouragement of home ownership through the Shared Ownership Scheme, Tenant Purchase Scheme, Affordable Housing Scheme and various Loan options.



▲ Members of the Sligo County Council Housing Staff

HOUSING CONSTRUCTION

The Housing Capital Allocation from the Department of the Environment and Local Government for 2003 was €8,770,000, which was made up as follows:

- ▶ Local Authority Housing Programme €8,500,000
- ▶ Residential Caravans & Group Housing for Travellers €170,000
- ▶ Remedial Works €100,000

At the end of 2003, Sligo County Council had reached its target of 242 housing starts which were allocated under the Multi-Annual Programme (i.e. 2000-2003).

The following table sets out in summary, progress on the larger housing schemes:

Completed in 2003		To be Completed in 2004	
Grange	22	Enniscrone	9
Dromore West	14	Cloonacool	6
Ballintogher	6	Bunninadden	4
Geevagh	8	Collooney	10
Keash	4		
Culfadda	6		
Total:	60	Total:	29

▼ New housing estate in Grange



The Council has always had a policy of purchasing houses on the open market where the houses represent value for money and where a demand exists. However, in the current economic climate, it is not possible to source many houses on the open market which fall within the Department of the Environment and Local Government's approved unit cost budget. However, three houses on the open market were purchased during 2003. In addition, construction commenced on 11 rural houses during the year.

New Council estates were opened in Grange and Dromore West during 2003. The Grange scheme consisted of 22 houses with 14 in Dromore West. 12 houses were also allocated in Ballymote which was an extension of the existing Scheme.

Remedial works are ongoing at Mountain View, Tubbercurry. Phase 2 of this project, which involves the refurbishment of 12 no. houses on the estate was completed at the end of 2003.

HOUSING MAINTENANCE

Approximately 66% of our maintenance budget of €430,000 was used for planned maintenance and the remaining 34% was used for emergency repairs. Planned maintenance involved replacing defective windows and doors and also replacing defective ranges.

Near the end of the year, the Council engaged the services of a Social Economy Co-Op to carry out environmental works (grass cutting, litter collection, flower bed construction) in various local authority estates.

Housing and Building



▲ New housing estate in Ballintogher

RENTS

Rents payable on Local Authority dwellings are assessed under a Differential Rents Scheme based on income of the household. The Rent Scheme was reviewed in 2003, to bring them into line with increases in disposable income and to meet the ever increasing demand for maintenance and estate management.

HOUSING LOANS

People who wish to purchase or build a house but cannot get a loan from a building society, bank, etc. may be eligible for a loan from a local authority. The maximum house purchase loan is €130,000 and, in 2003, Sligo County Council paid out €139,386.71 in house purchase, construction and reconstruction loans.

Loan Approvals 2003

Purchases	3 (*)
Construction	0
Reconstruction	6

(*) Includes 2 purchases of Shared Ownership Council Equity.

Loan Payments 2003

	No	Amount
Purchases	2 (**)	51,220.27
Construction	4 (2 of which were Final Payments)	9,013.19
Reconstruction	10 (2 of which were Final Payments)	79,153.25

(**) One of which was Shared Ownership Council Equity.

TENANT PURCHASE

Tenants of a local authority house for a period of at least one year may apply to purchase their rented house outright or by means of Shared Ownership under the Tenant Purchase Scheme. The purchase price will be the market value of the house in its existing state of repair and condition, less various discounts.

In 2003, 16 houses were sold under the Tenant Purchase Scheme and one of these was sold by way of Shared Ownership. Five of these were approved for Council Loans and the remaining ten received loans from other financial institutions.

SHARED OWNERSHIP SCHEME

This scheme offers home ownership in a number of steps to those who cannot afford full ownership in one step in the traditional way. Initially, ownership of the house is shared between the shared owner and the Local Authority, however, the shared owner has the option at a later date of purchasing the Council's share outright when they are in a better position to afford it financially.

In 2003, Sligo County Council received an allocation of €3,500,000 to purchase/construct houses under the Shared Ownership Scheme. 22 Provisional Approvals were issued to applicants and 21 Final Approvals were granted under this scheme to the end of the year.

IMPROVEMENT WORKS IN LIEU OF RE-HOUSING

This Scheme allows Sligo County Council to improve or extend privately owned houses occupied or intended to be occupied by an approved applicant for housing as an alternative to the provision of Local Authority Housing.

During 2003, 21 houses were upgraded at an average cost per house of €32,142 and 19 applications were approved under the Scheme

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

In 2003 six affordable houses were completed in Ballintogher. The houses were constructed by McGurran Construction, Bellanaleck, Co. Fermanagh and the purchase price of each house was €125,000. The price represented excellent value for money given the standard of the houses and their proximity to Sligo town.

Plans are at an advanced stage for three further schemes at Grange (10), Carney (7) and Strandhill (8) with construction on all three schemes expected to start in 2004.

Housing and Building

ESTATE MANAGEMENT

The Estate Management Officer has been active on all Council estates during 2003 working in partnership with tenants. Pre-tenancy training and induction programmes became mandatory for tenants in Housing Estates throughout the county, with a particular emphasis on addressing anti-social behaviour in estates. Tenant handbooks and housing Induction packs were issued to each new tenant in new estates.

2003 saw the introduction of the Environmental Maintenance co-operative formed with workers from the original Jobs Initiative Programme. Environmental works were contracted on various housing estates throughout the county under the direction of the Estate Management Officer. During 2003, tenant involvement and assistance was evident in Mountain View, Tubbercurry, under the Remedial Works Scheme, which was completed in December. CLÁR funding for estate enhancement works was allocated and apportioned to various housing estates in the CLÁR area of the county, all work being completed in 2003.

Communication links throughout the county continued to improve during 2003 with the Estate Management Officer attending meetings and building initiatives with new and existing Resident Associations. He also meets with individual clients to discuss issues such as maintenance, environmental, and anti-social concerns. Communication links were also evident with elected representatives with several meetings and joint discussions regarding presentation of new initiatives for 2004. It is envisaged in 2004 to draft and implement a policy on tenant participation in estate management. It is the objective of the council to promote participation of tenants/communities in the management of their homes and neighbourhoods through the provision of this policy.

ESSENTIAL REPAIRS GRANTS

The principal benefit of the Essential Repairs Grants Scheme is that it enables structural repairs to be carried out to prolong the life of a house for an elderly resident. The maximum grant available under the Scheme is €9,523, with 2/3 of the cost being recouped from the Department of the Environment and Local Government.

In 2003, 33 approvals were issued during the year and 39 grants were paid out under this Scheme, totalling €149,851.86.

DISABLED PERSONS GRANTS

The Disabled Persons Grants Scheme allows Sligo County Council to make a grant available for the provision of house adaptations to meet the needs of a household member who is disabled. Due to the ever increasing number of applications, the grants are awarded on a priority basis, with a focus on those cases where the applicant's disability seriously impacts on their quality of life.

In 2003, the maximum amount payable under the Scheme was €20,315, with 2/3 of the cost being recouped from the Department of the Environment and Local Government. 144 approvals were issued during the year and 115 grants were paid out under this Scheme totalling €470,753.48.

TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION

A new Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee was appointed during 2003 following an election for traveller representatives being carried out among the traveller community in Sligo. In addition to traveller representatives, the Committee also comprises members and officials of Sligo County Council, Sligo Borough Council.

Approval was received from the Department of the Environment and Local Government during 2003 for the recruitment of a Traveller Liaison Officer, whom, it is anticipated will be appointed early in 2004.

During 2003, the Council commenced the process of varying its Development Plan to zone an area at Cloonamahon, Collooney, for the accommodation of a Transient Halting Site. A decision on whether to proceed with the variation was deferred at a Council meeting held on 1 December 2003. It is anticipated that this matter will be progressed during 2004.

An Assessment of Traveller Accommodation Needs was carried out during 2003, the results of which will form the basis of a new five year Traveller Accommodation Programme to be compiled in 2004.



▲ **Travellers Consultative Committee**
 – Back Row: Mairead McLoughlin, John Owens, Cllr Michael Fleming, Terry Rooney, Michael Sweeney.
 Front Row: Emer Connolly, Cllr Albert Higgins, Cllr Roddy McGuinn, Rose Ward

Road Transportation and Safety

Sligo County Council is committed to providing an efficient and safe road network and is responsible for the maintenance and improvement of over 2600km of public roads.



▲ N15 Strengthening Works

SLIGO INNER RELIEF ROAD

The 'Advance Works' contract on the Sligo Inner Relief Road were carried out in 2003, which included archaeological investigations along the route and the relocation of services. It is expected that the main construction contract will commence in 2004.

RESTORATION IMPROVEMENT GRANT

Funding of €4.1m was provided towards this scheme in 2003 for work on non-national (regional and local) roads. Work carried out includes surface restoration, strengthening poor sections of road, improvement of drainage and restoration of roads to original widths.

Surface restoration:

9.8km of Regional roads and 125km of local roads restored under the programme.

Road reconstruction:

5.4 km of Regional roads and 0.8 km of local roads were improved under this element of the programme, including...

- ▶ R290 Ballygawley/Kilross
- ▶ R284 Mullaghmore, Soeey
- ▶ R297 Bunowna/ Killeenduff
- ▶ R293 Gurteen to County Boundary
- ▶ Local road L66017 Carrowhubcock South.

RESTORATION MAINTENANCE GRANTS

€1.4m was provided in 2003 to surface dress non-national (local and regional) roads – this funding facilitated the restoration of 12km of regional roads and 61.4km of local roads.

DISCRETIONARY IMPROVEMENT GRANTS

Funding of €618,000 was allocated under this programme in 2003 to carry out improvement works on non-national roads. The works included construction of footpaths, public lighting extension and improvement, improvement of sight lines at bends and junctions, flooding relief, bridge repairs and road safety.

The programme also provides for the erection of flashing amber lights at schools, and schools to benefit in 2003 included Carns (Gurteen), Killeenduff, Calry and Soeey.

ROAD RE-ALIGNMENT SCHEMES

R292 Strandhill Road

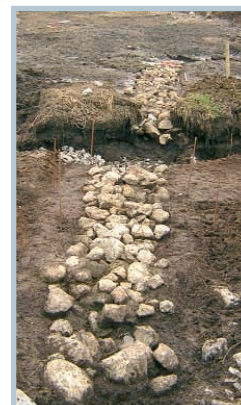
Over 100,000 cubic metres of material was used in the construction of an embankment to raise the new road to the level of the existing road at Tully. The new realignments have replaced the narrow, winding section of road thereby improving safety and accessibility to Strandhill village. Over €376,000 was spent on this work in 2003, and it is expected that the scheme will be completed in 2004.

R294 Mullaghroe

The Mullaghroe road was realigned at a cost of €364,000. The scheme was completed and opened to traffic in 2003.

R284 Drumiskibbole /Glenagoolagh

A Compulsory Purchase Order was made in respect of this scheme in 2002. The project involved extensive rock breaking to a depth of 12 metres and import of 'fill' material to a depth of 8 metres. The route will be opened to traffic in 2004. €521,000 was spent on the project in the current year.



▲ Stone pathway uncovered during archaeological works at Drumiskibbole /Glenagoolagh

Archaeological works carried out prior to the main contract at Drumiskibbole

/Glenagoolagh provided a small insight into the human activity in the area almost four thousand years ago.

LOW COST ACCIDENT REDUCTION SCHEME

Non-national roads

A grant of €68,000 was allocated to this scheme in 2003.

Works included...

- ▶ R297/L6601 Muckduff-Enniscrone
- ▶ R297/L6404 Rathlee
- ▶ R294/L4504/L4403 Powellsboro-Chaffpool
- ▶ R296/L5603/L5601/L56012 Junction Cloonkeevy, Ballymote
- ▶ R293/L81062/L81065 Junction Kilfree, Gurteen
- ▶ L33093/L7305 Junction Ballygilgan, Lissadell

Road Transportation and Safety

NATIONAL PRIMARY IMPROVEMENT WORKS

Strengthening work was carried out on the N4 at Ardloy and Carrownagark, Riverstown at a cost of €200,000. Quality pavement overlay was constructed north of Grange village at a cost of €422,000.

NATIONAL SECONDARY IMPROVEMENT WORKS

Pavement improvements were carried out on N59 at Carrownacreevy, Culleens, Grangebeg and Templeboy at a total cost of over €400,000.

CLÁR

The CLÁR programme has provided very valuable funding to Sligo County Council over a number of years. The programme is administered through the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, and in 2003 funding was provided to provide flashing safety lights at 14 schools throughout the county. It is generally recognised that the safety lights are an important factor in reducing traffic speeds in the vicinity of schools.

CLÁR Funded Flashing Safety Lights at Schools 2003

SCHOOL NAME	CLÁR
Drumina National School	6,360
Mullaghroe National School	6,360
Holy Family National School Tubbercurry	6,360
Enniscrone National School	6,360
Easkey Vocational School	6,360
Rathlee National School	6,360
Bunninadden National School	6,360
Gurteen Vocational School	6,360
Culfadda National School	6,360
Cloghogue	6,360
TOTAL	63,600



▲ Road Improvements in Ballymote

Funding of €440,210 was allocated in 2003 to Local Improvement Scheme from Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. 22 Schemes were offered and accepted.

CLÁR has also funded the strengthening and double-surface dressing of Class 3 roads, and Local Improvement Scheme works were also funded under the programme.

ICBAN

The Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) was established in 1995 and is made up of ten local Authorities – five in the North and five in the Republic. Since its formation ICBAN has received core funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) under the INTERREG initiative.

In 2003 €450,00 was received in ICBAN grants for the following road schemes..

Regional roads

▶ R290 Ballygrania	53,000
▶ R290 Rathrippon	52,000
▶ R287 Dromore/Castleore	80,000
▶ R290 Kilross/Ballintogher	75,000
▶ R284 Doonally	55,000
▶ R287 Crossboy	65,000
▶ R290 Crossboy	20,000

National Roads

▶ N16 Gortnagrelly	50,000
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PROPOSED MAJOR SCHEMES

N17 – Sligo-Galway Road

The route was selected for the new 25km section between Annaghmore to Curry, to tie in with the Charlestown by-pass.

Preliminary design work and documentation for the Environmental Impact Statement and Compulsory Purchase Order will be prepared in 2004 for a 10km section of the route, which will include a by-pass of Tubbercurry.

N4 – Sligo-Dublin road

The route has been selected for the 11km re-alignment of the N4 between Cloonamahon and Castlebaldwin – further stages of work will be dependent on NRA (National Roads Authority) funding.

N15 – Sligo-Bundoran Road

In 1998 the NRA indicated that the unimproved section of the N15 in County Sligo would require upgrading between the years 2005 – 2009 in order to maintain average ‘inter-urban’ speeds of 80kph.

In 2004 it is intended to undertake a constraints study report for the re-alignment of the N15 from Sligo to the county boundary. This will be followed by design of route options and public consultation for route selection later in 2004.

Bridge Restoration and Repairs

RESTORATION OF LISCONNY BRIDGE (L 1302).



▲ Lisconny Bridge

Lisconny Bridge is a fine five span masonry arch structure spanning the Unshin River near Cloonamahon. The structure, which is thought to be over 200 years old, was suffering from foundation movement, resulting in serious structural cracking in four of the five arches plus a number of other defects. The structure was also the home of Daubenton Bats and Dippers. Care was taken in carrying out the work and consultation with various Duchas, NW Fisheries and a Consultant Naturalist assured that best practice was adhered to.

The works involved both specialist contractors and the Council's own outdoor staff in a joint restoration programme, which included: foundation stabilisation using grout injection and mini-piling, river bed protection, spandrel stabilisation, pressure pointing and pavement re-profiling. Additionally the external walls and parapets of the structure were pointed using traditional materials by council staff who have benefitted from specialist masonry workshops.

RESTORATION OF TEMPLE HOUSE BRIDGE (L 1601).

Templehouse Bridge spans the Owenmore River and was originally built in 1812. It is a five span elliptical arch masonry structure with substantial wing walls supporting the road approaching the river bridge on both sides. The structure is listed in the County Development Plan as a protected structure. The western wing walls were leaning and bulging outwards and a large portion of the southwest wall collapsed at the beginning of the year.

Under a Special Improvement Grant, Sligo County Council rehabilitated that part of the structure using expertise available within the Council's own indoor and outdoor staff.

The works involved:

- ▶ Taking down the external ashlar limestone walling and storing for re-erection,
- ▶ Demolition of the old retaining walls and footings with associated road closure
- ▶ Design and construction of new retaining walls and raft foundation.
- ▶ Embankment infill and road pavement

- ▶ Re-establishment of road and traffic flow
- ▶ Reconstruction of masonry walling to restore bridge structure to original appearance with strengthened parapets.

This work is being ably carried out by Ballymote Area Staff including; John Clerkin, General Service Supervisor; Tommy Nellany, Craftsman; and Michael Coen, General Operative.



▲ Construction work on Lisconny Bridge

The reconstruction of the ashlar masonry walling is specialist work and Tommy Nellany is one of our most experienced staff members with the expertise to complete the project to a high standard.

Project Engineer, Gary Salter, S.E.E. says that *"The Council has been involved in two masonry seminars and our staff are improving their knowledge and techniques at restoration works on heritage structures all the time. Such work is ideally suited for council work where flexibility and adverse weather are often significant factors"*

RIVERSTOWN BRIDGE (L 1303).

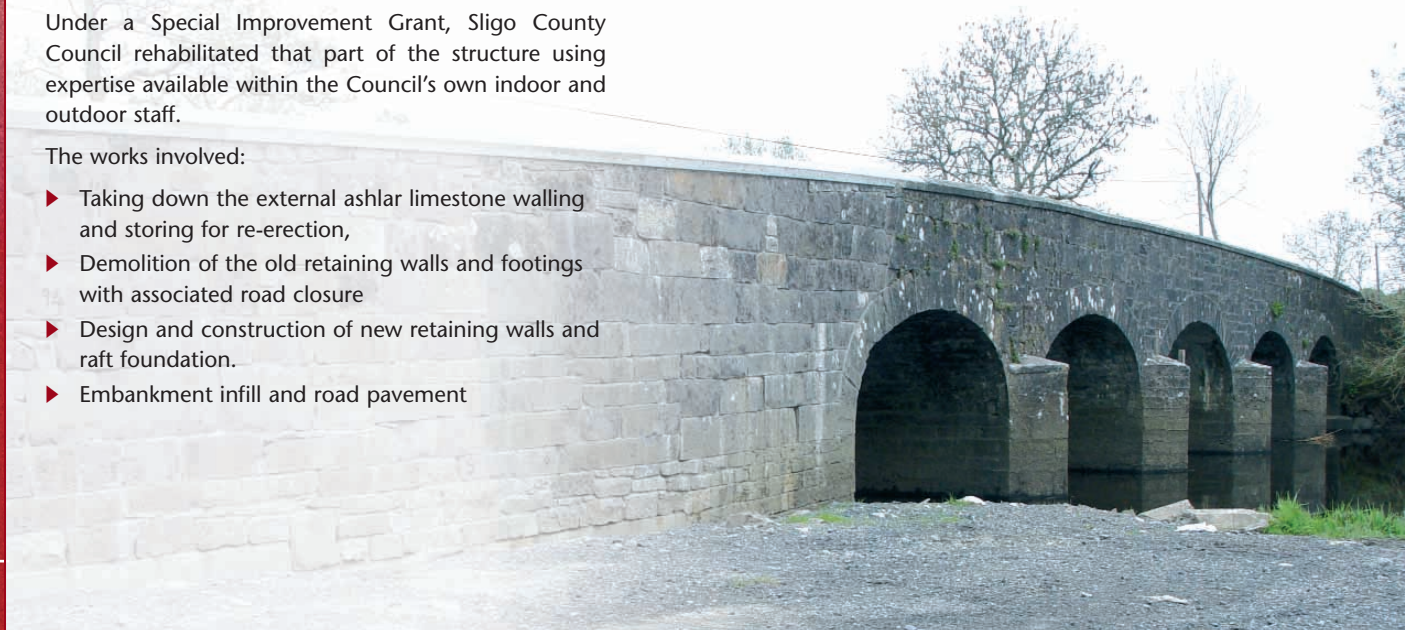
This three span masonry structure was also repaired and strengthened on 2003.

The work involved: foundation stabilisation, structural injection grouting, pointing spandrel ties and patters plates and river training.

DONAGHINTRAIN BRIDGE (L2302-56).

Repairs works carried out on this bridge include: Underpinning to abutments, pointing of abutments, vegetation clearance, repairs to buttresses and drainage improvement.

▼ Templehouse Bridge



Mullaghmore Harbour Breakwater Improvements 2002 and 2003

The original part of Mullaghmore Harbour was built in 1841.



▲ Mullaghmore Harbour

The harbour is a well established, well protected facility used for commercial fishing, sailing, sport angling, sub-aqua diving, water skiing, water safety courses, power boating and boat charter. The harbour was subsequently extended later in the nineteenth century to form the current internal sheltered haven.

Heavy reliance is placed on the outer breakwater to provide shelter to the harbours main wall and the entrance area to the harbour basin. The original masonry breakwater suffered intermittent storm damage, particularly in the latter part of the last century. This deterioration would eventually lead to progressive and accelerated collapse of the structure and expose the harbour to severe attack and leave the harbour entrance vulnerable.

Sligo County Council engaged consultants Kirk McClure Morton to assess the condition of the breakwater and to advise on suitable remedial works. In addition to the structural repairs to the breakwater, harbour usage and the needs of the variety of harbour users was assessed. The provision of a landing facility with 1.5m draft at MLW and the provision of navigation lighting were identified as key issues that should be addressed.

A scheme was then designed to encompass the various improvements, considered necessary for the general development and integrity of Mullaghmore Harbour, which consisted of the following:

- ▶ The construction of a new concrete promenade and crest wall. This facility includes surface lighting for nighttime use and a raised level walkway and viewing area.
- ▶ An extension to the existing breakwater, both seaward and approximately 40m in a southern direction. This extension is a conventional marine breakwater structure with rockfill core and rock armour protection.

- ▶ The provision of rock armour protection to the northern face of the existing breakwater.
- ▶ The installation of a serviced pontoon boarding facility located by tubular steel piles at the end of the existing breakwater. This concrete pontoon (20m by 4m) is protected by the breakwater extension and accessed by a marine grade aluminium bridge from the new breakwater deck. Surface lighting and a fresh water supply are provided on the pontoon.
- ▶ The provision of a solar powered starboard lateral pile beacon with a range of 3 nautical miles. This navigation beacon is located at the southern tip of the new breakwater extension.

Various other ancillary works on the north pier have also been included in the project, such as improvements to public lighting, provision of a fresh water supply, resurfacing of the deck and modifications to the access road and slipway, improved parking and surface drainage.

The project was subject to planning and foreshores licensing procedures.

The Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources co-funded the project in association with Sligo County Council. Conway Brothers (Sligo) Ltd. was main contractor and began mobilisation on site in September 2002. Kirk McClure Morton were the Consultant Engineers for the project which had an estimated cost €1.27m. The construction phase essentially lasted 10 months and the new facility opened to the public in July 2003. Finishing works were carried out off-season and were essentially completed by the end of 2003.

The improvements have been well received by the Mullaghmore community in general and particularly by the harbour users group who were consulted and involved in the project.

Planning and Development

The year 2003 was a very busy and demanding year for both the elected members of Sligo County Council and the Planning department with no less than four different development plans being debated in the Council chamber in the course of the year.

In addition, the number of planning applications received by the Council increased by 13.87% which reflected the increased level of development proposed in the county.



▲ Road Improvement at entrance to IDA Development Park

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

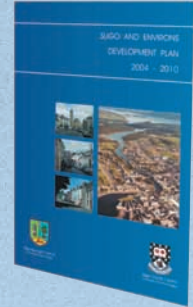
During 2003, 1108 planning applications were received by the council, in comparison to 991 applications in 2002 – an increase of 13.87%.

RURAL HOUSING POLICY

In response to claims that the Council’s rural housing policy was too restrictive, a review of the policy was undertaken during 2003 and a committee of elected members, with the assistance of Council officials reviewed the policy. The total number of applications determined was 585, 61% of which were determined in 8 weeks. Following an agreement by the full Council the County Development Plan was amended, following a public consultation period and an amended policy was adopted by the full Council. It is considered that the new rural housing policy will give greater clarity to those intending to apply for planning permission in rural areas.

SLIGO AND ENVIRONS DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2004-2010

As the growth and development of Sligo in recent years has played a key role in the economic development of the wider county and region, it was considered necessary to plan for the surrounding Environs of Sligo city alongside planning for the city itself. It was therefore agreed by Sligo County Council and Sligo Borough Council to prepare a joint plan for the region to cover the period 2004-2010.



Following a two year statutory process involving public consultation and a number of Council meetings in both authorities the plan was jointly adopted by the members of Sligo County Council and Sligo Borough Council on the 8th December 2003.

It is considered that the new Sligo and Environs plan is likely to have a significant influence on the future growth and development of Sligo and its Environs for years to come.

Emanating from the adoption of the Sligo and Environs Plan, additional studies are underway in respect of the Sligo port area and the Carraroe area for detailed master planning and improving urban designs standards which is considered to be an important exercise in implementing the Sligo and Environs Development plan.

▼ Kings Mountain Wind Farm



Planning and Development

STRANDHILL LOCAL AREA PLAN 2003-2009

The Strandhill Local Area plan was adopted by the elected member of the Council on the 7th July 2003, following a statutory process which commenced in November 2002.

Prior to the adoption of the plan public consultation meetings were held in Strandhill and the plan was put on public display in the Council offices and local library. Over 60 submissions were considered by the Council involving lengthy at a number of meetings in the Council chamber.

The entire production of the plan, including design and printing, was undertaken by the planning staff of the Council and this plan has provided a blueprint for the preparation of other local area plans to be prepared by the Council over the coming years.

The Strandhill plan has introduced for the first time within the county area of Sligo, the designation of zoned lands for various uses. In accordance with the Planning Acts, all applications for residential development on zoned lands must now include proposals for social and affordable housing. This will assist the Council in addressing the housing needs in Strandhill.

REVIEW OF SLIGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The preparation of a new County Development Plan 2005-2011, which commenced in May 2003, will involve a two year statutory process involving widespread public consultation.



▲ New Nursing Home in Strandhill under construction

The National Building Agency have being engaged to assist Sligo County Council with the work involved. The plan will cover the area of the county outside the borough and Environs area of Sligo City as defined in the Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2004-2010.

Over 470 local groups (including 273 sporting groups) have also being notified in writing of the new proposal and have being invited to make submissions. In addition over 400 providers of infrastructure/services have being notified in writing and invited to submit relevant information.

It is expected that a draft plan will be approved by the elected members in the spring of 2004 to enable the public consultation process to begin, in advance of the plan being adopted in 2005.



ENNISCRONE LOCAL AREA PLAN 2004-2010

In 2003 Sligo County Council decided to prepare a Local Area Plan for Enniscrone to ensure that proper planning and sustainable development of the area. It was agreed that the plan will guide and regulate development though land use zoning measures, planning policies and development objectives. The area of the plan incorporates the townlands of Carrowhubuck South, Carrowhubuck North, Frankford, Trotts, Bartragh and Muckduff and includes undeveloped land around the town.

The National Building Agency was engaged by the Council to prepare this plan in collaboration with the staff of Sligo County Council. The draft plan has been put on public display, and following consideration by the elected members of submissions from the public it is expected that the plan will be adopted in early 2004.

REGIONAL PLANNING GUIDELINES

Regional planning guidelines have being prepared for the Border Region to establish a planning framework for future County Development Plans. The guidelines will address major infrastructure requirements in growing a Gateway City for Sligo and the connected rural areas.

Mr Brendan Carolan, Senior Planner with Sligo County Council acted as chair of the Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal planning committee of the Border Region, and the committee has made a submission to be included in the Guidelines. A publication "Draft Regional Guidelines implementing the National Spatial Strategy" is expected to be published in early 2004 and is intended for adoption during that year.

CUSTOMER SERVICES

In an effort to provide improved service to customers attending the Planning Department, improvements were carried out to the public counter area to provide more privacy for applicants and their agents. In addition it is hoped to improve the processing of planning applications to speed up the process, leading to earlier decisions. In the coming year it is also intended to have active consultation with planning agents and to address areas of concern and difficulties. It is also intended to implement a more structured approach for pre-planning enquiries.

In November 2003 a pre-planning clinic for customers was provided in the one-stop shop in Tubbercurry to service the Tubbercurry electoral area. An area planner attends the "clinic" between 10 and 1pm each Tuesday and is available for pre-planning advice and consultation. This new service has being provided in addition to the planning clinics already established at County Hall, Riverside on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.



Planning and Development



ENFORCEMENT STAFF

◀ L-R:
 Frank Burke,
 Declan Breen,
 Fineen O'Driscoll,
 Thomas Gallagher
 Seated:
 Colette Sweeney,
 Caroline Feeney,
 Louise Gallagher

ENFORCEMENT SECTION

While the process of Better Local Government was being considered local Authorities reviewed their enforcement procedures and practices.

Sligo County Council decided to establish an 'Enforcement' Section to concentrate solely on this new body of work. It was of critical importance that the new section was not assumed into a larger service area – quite often in a busy service area, the urgent gets done at the expense of sometimes more important items.

In setting up the Enforcement Section, it was recognised by the management of the Council that most people, including developers, try their best to comply with the law. This was reflected in the policy adopted by the policy adopted by the SPC with responsibility in this area, which set out that every effort would be made to resolve problems by agreement in the first instance, rather than by recourse to legal action.

Cllr Patsy Barry, Chair of the SPC on Planning, Environment and Emergency Services, is 'delighted that the staff in the enforcement section have been so successful and I want in particular to compliment them on the even-handed and considered fashion in which they have dealt with the often difficult cases that come their way.'

One of the main aims of enforcement section was to change the culture that existed, particularly in relation to breaches in planning law, and to create an awareness that unauthorised development was unacceptable and would not be tolerated by the Council. At this time there are also a number of other developments that have to be altered in order to comply with the Planning and Development requirements.

“ I want in particular to compliment them on the even-handed and considered fashion in which they have dealt with the often difficult cases that come their way. ”

While members of the team might be forgiven for having have some reservations about working in a section with the ominous title of 'Enforcement', this is certainly not the case. The Staff ensure that every effort is made to deal with people in a fair, impartial and considered manner. The area of work can be quite complex, but the existence of a multi-disciplinary team, and the inclusion of all team members in the decision making process, provide the foundation for balanced decision making.

In the preparation of its Operational Plan for 2003, the Enforcement Team identified the question of access for people with disabilities as a priority and steps have been taken to increase compliance with the building regulations in this area – for instance, one licensed premises in Sligo town is re-designing the layout of its premises to make it accessible to people with disabilities, and in particular to provide wheelchair access.

One important facet of the job is that of educating the general public as to their obligations in terms of planning. It is the fervent hope of the people working in Enforcement Section that they will perform this role so well, they may ultimately do themselves out of a job.

Environmental Services

In July 2003 the staff of the Environment Section moved to new purpose built offices at Unit 9, Cleveragh Business Park, Sligo.

Before this move the staff were located in separate offices with the administrative staff in County Hall and the laboratory staff and technicians located in the Old Jail. This was unsatisfactory from an operational point of view and it resulted in the unnecessary duplication of records, files etc. The new offices were custom fitted for the Environmental Services Department and include laboratories and a meeting room.

The Staff of the Environment Services Section deal with a wide range of issues over a number of 'programme groups' including:

Programme Group 5: Environmental Protection

- ▶ Waste Management
- ▶ Pollution Control
- ▶ Blue Flag Beaches
- ▶ Water Safety
- ▶ Casual Trading
- ▶ Environmental Awareness
- ▶ Environmental Enforcement
- ▶ Litter

Programme Group 7: Agriculture & Education

- ▶ Food Safety

Programme Group 8: Miscellaneous

- ▶ Control of Dogs
- ▶ Control of Horses

▼ River Moy at Banada



▲ The Blue Flag is awarded only to the best beaches

In 2003, there were 13 full time staff employed in the section comprising:

- ▶ John McHugh - Senior Engineer
- ▶ Emer Concannon - Senior Executive Engineer
- ▶ Breda Ronayne - Administrative Officer

Environmental Technicians

- ▶ Pamela Bergin,
- ▶ Rosie Morrissey
- ▶ Rose Jordan
- ▶ Thomas Sexton (July 2003)

Administrative Staff

- ▶ Ann Johnston
- ▶ Marie Doherty
- ▶ Nicola Fallon
- ▶ Naomi Gorevan

Litter Warden

- ▶ Aileen Feeney

Veterinary Officer

- ▶ Conall Colleary



Environmental Services

POLLUTION CONTROL

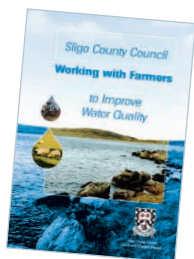
Water Pollution

Protecting our surface and ground waters from pollution is the primary objective in the water pollution control area. This is governed by the Local Government (Water Pollution) Acts, 1977 & 1990, and Regulations under these Acts. The LG (Water Pollution) Phosphorous Regulations, 1998 were introduced to tackle the increasing problem of eutrophication in Ireland's rivers and lakes. These regulations place an obligation on Sligo County Council to maintain the water quality in our county's 'satisfactory waters' and to improve the water quality in 'unsatisfactory waters' by 2007. A catchment management approach has been taken by Sligo County Council to achieve this. The County is divided into three main catchments – the Owenmore, which includes Lough Arrow, the Lough Gill, and the Moy Catchments.

Catchment Management involves surveying the area to determine the risk to surface and ground waters, associated with activities in the area. These activities include forestry, farms, septic tanks, industrial discharges and waste water treatment discharges. On completion and analysis of the survey work, measures shall be put in place to minimise the pollution risk from individual activities, and overall policies shall be put in place for each sector.

The work on the Lough Arrow and Lough Gill catchments was co-ordinated by Technical Committees, initiated by Sligo County Council. The Technical Committee members include representatives from Sligo County Council, Leitrim County Council (Lough Gill), Roscommon County Council (Lough Arrow), EPA, North Western Regional Fisheries Board, and I.T. Sligo. Septic tank and farm surveys were completed in 2003 in the Lough Arrow catchment. The septic tanks were categorised according to potential risk of water pollution – low, medium and high. All low and medium risk septic tank owners were contacted with a view to the owners carrying out improvements on their systems.

A guidance document for farmers was drafted in 2003 to highlight and encourage good environmental practices within the farming community, according to local and national policies.



In addition to the above, Environmental Technicians carried out a sampling programme on Lough Gill and Lough Arrow, and the feeder streams entering the lakes. In total, 149 lake samples and 102 feeder stream samples were taken and analysed. The results deemed both Lough Gill and Lough Arrow as having satisfactory water quality.

Lough Arrow Sediment Study

A sediment study on Lough Arrow initiated in 2002, was completed in 2003. The objectives of the study was to obtain information on the nature of recently deposited sediments in Lough Arrow, with particular reference to phosphorus, and to gain some insight into recent trends in the lake's ecological development by analyses of short sediment cores. The report found that lake sediments could be a potential contributory source of phosphorus to the water under certain environmental conditions and that data indicated a very low sedimentation rate in the lake.

Evidence from the core analyses indicated that Lough Arrow has become more enriched during the last 90 years, despite recent EPA reports documenting a largely unchanged status. Timely intervention to alter this trend and diminish inputs of phosphorus will be required by all stakeholders.

Recommendations were made on all planning proposals and forestry proposals in all the sensitive catchments, particularly the three mentioned above in County Sligo. The following is a summary of the applications dealt with in 2003:

Type	No.
Single Houses	133
Housing Developments	2
Commercial*	58
Agricultural	19
Forestry	34
Total	243

*Commercial include quarries, wind farms, fuel depots, industries, group and public water schemes.

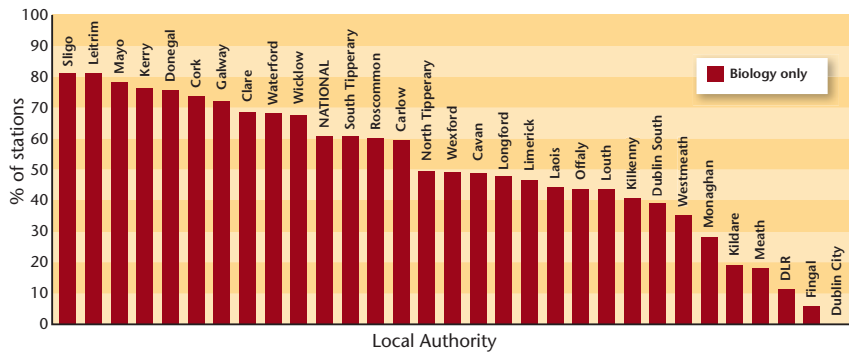
Enforcement

A large number of pollution complaints including water, waste, air and noise were received in 2003 and they were dealt with on a priority basis based on the potential risk of pollution from the activity or incident. Pollution incidences are dealt with under the LG (Water Pollution) Acts, 1977 & 1990, the Air Pollution Act, 1987 and the Waste Management Act, 1996. In 2003, 125 pollution complaints were dealt with: 104 Water Pollution, 5 Air Pollution and 16 Waste Management.

Air Pollution

In October 2003, Sligo town and the townlands of Finisklin, Knappaghmore and Ballydoogan, were designated 'Smoke Free Zones', under the Air Pollution Act, 1987 (Marketing, Sale & Distribution of Fuels) Regulations, 2003. Sligo County Council is the Air Pollution Authority for Sligo Borough and county, and is therefore charged with implementing these regulations. In 2003, the concentration was on raising awareness of these regulations through the local media.

Environmental Services



▲ Percentage of local authority river stations with satisfactory biological water quality in 1998-2001



▲ Environmental Technician Rose Jordan analysing water samples

Education

A number of Public Relations and educational initiatives took place in 2003 relating to pollution control, including the following:

- ▶ Talks/lectures to IFA groups
- ▶ Presentation of an Environmental Information Desk in Sligo Arcade during Science week
- ▶ Local newspaper articles

Environmental Science Laboratory

Under the LG Water Pollution Acts 1977 & 1990, the EC (Quality of Water intended for Human Consumption) Regulations, 1988 and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Act, 1992, (Urban Waste Water Treatment) Regulations, 1994, Sligo County Council is responsible for the monitoring of all the County Councils public water supplies, urban waste water treatment plant discharges and industrial discharges. The Council also samples and analyses private wells for the Rural Water Programme. The Council's water abstraction points are monitored in accordance with the EC (Quality of Surface Waters intended for the abstraction of drinking water) Regulations, 1989.

The County Council is also responsible for ensuring adequate monitoring of rivers, lakes and bathing waters.

In 2003 the sampling was carried out by the County Council with the EPA carrying out some monitoring on an agency basis for the County Council. The samples were analysed in Sligo County Council's Environmental Science Laboratory. The following is a summary of the sampling and analysis that took place in 2003 by or on behalf of the County Council:

Samples Taken and Analysed	No.
Public Water Supply	186
Raw Water Supply Source	13
Private Well Tests	21
Public Well Tests	23
Urban Waste Water Treatment Plants	139
Receiving Waters	60
Licensed Industrial Discharges	34
Rivers	356
Single Houses	149
Housing Developments	102
Commercial*	97
Agricultural	3
Forestry	50
Total	1233

*Miscellaneous include pollution incidents.

The following is the percentage of overall compliance of Sligo's Drinking Water, in 2003, with the standards under the EC (Quality of Water intended for Human Consumption) Regulations, 1988:

Public Water supplies	97% Overall Compliance
Public & Private Group Water Schemes:	90% Overall Compliance



Environmental Services

Blue Flag Beaches

Sligo County retained its Blue Flag status on both Rosses Point beach and Mullaghmore beach in 2003. Blue Flag status was not awarded to Enniscrone beach in 2003, due to a small number of 2002 bathing water samples not complying with the stringent Blue Flag water quality standards. (All 2002 samples complied with the EU Bathing Water standards). Bathing water quality results for all three beaches, in the 2003 season, met the Blue Flag criteria standards, which will influence the 2004 Blue Flag awards.



▲ One of Sligo's Blue Flag Beaches, Rosses Point

WASTE MANAGEMENT

The target in 2003 was to progress with the implementation of the Connaught Waste Management Plan, adopted in September 2001, to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill and to increase the recycling rates in Sligo.

Recycling Initiatives to Reduce Waste to Landfill

Separate Collection of Dry Recyclable Materials

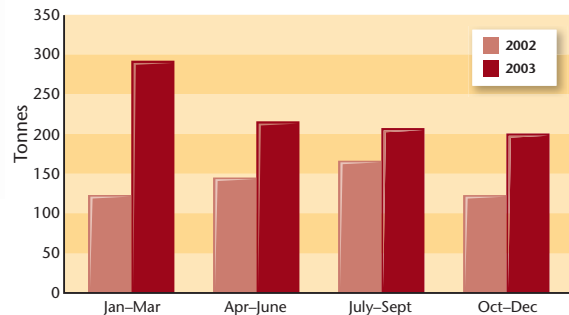
In February 2003, a pilot scheme for the separate collection of dry recyclable materials took place in a selected area of Sligo town.



Householders were invited to purchase a clear plastic bag in which they could put dry recyclable materials including cardboard, newspapers, plastic bottles and aluminium cans, which was collected separately from the ordinary waste. Following the success of this initiative, the scheme was rolled out to all of Sligo Borough and environs. By the end of 2003, other items including magazines, tetrapak and food cans were included in the dry recyclable collection.

The following is a comparison between the 2003 quarterly glass recycling figures for Sligo and those for 2002:

Glass Recycling Tonnes 2002 v 2003 (61% increase in 2003)



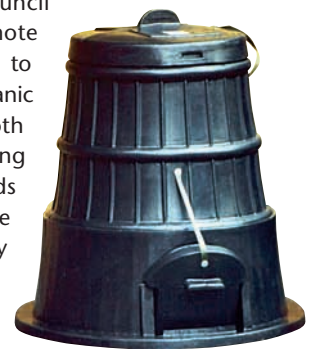
Bring Banks



At the end of 2003, there were 37 bring bank stations located in Sligo town and county, an increase from 33 in 2002. The new sites were installed in Calry, Beltra, Skreen and Rosses Point. All 37 stations accept clear, brown & green glass and aluminium cans, with 21 accepting plastic bottles. A total of 912 tonnes of glass, 49 tonnes of aluminium cans and 70 tonnes of plastic bottles were recycled from Bring Banks in Sligo in 2003. The programme of upgrading existing Bring Banks continued in 2003 and banks were upgraded in Gurteen, Grange, Enniscrone and Strandhill.

Home Composting

In 2003, Sligo County Council continued to strongly promote home composting as a means to divert significant volumes of organic waste away from landfill. Both composting and vericomposting are effective recycling methods suitable for householders. At the end of 2003, Sligo County Council had sold a total of almost 2,000 home composters to residents in County Sligo.



Household Hazardous Waste

In May 2003, Sligo County Council facilitated the collection of household hazardous waste. The collection was a success with householders using this opportunity to dispose of domestic hazardous wastes such as paint cans, batteries etc., in an environmentally careful manner.

In 2003, Sligo achieved the second highest growth rate in glass recycling in the country, after Cavan. Sligo achieved a 61% increase in the glass-recycling rate over the 2002 figures, and recycled more glass per person than any other county @ 34 bottles per person.

Environmental Services

Civic Amenity Sites

Under the Connaught Waste Management Plan, two Recycling Centres are to be provided in Sligo, one in Sligo town and one in Tubbercurry. In 2003, Sligo County Council secured Planning Permission (Part VIII) and a Certificate of Registration from the Environmental Protection Agency for a Recycling Centre on council owned land in Tubbercurry. Provision of this recycling facility is subject to funding from the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Waste Disposal Sligo, situated in Sligo town, expanded their Civic Amenity Site in 2003, and at the end of the year were accepting newspapers, magazines, plastic bottles, glass bottles and aluminium cans.

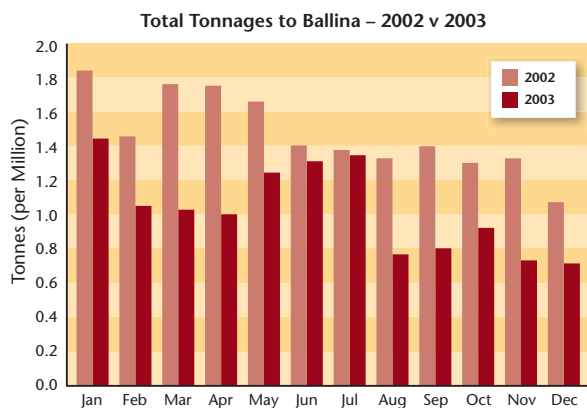
Construction & Demolition (C&D) Recycling Facility

Sligo must provide a C&D Recycling Facility under the Connaught Waste Management Plan. In 2003, Planning Permission (Part VIII) was refused for a C&D Recycling Facility at the council owned Union Quarry, Ballygawley, Co. Sligo.

Pay per Volume System

The pay per volume ('pay per bag') system for the collection of domestic waste continued in 2003, thus continuing the incentive to reduce the waste going into the domestic bin, thus to landfill, and encouraging householders to use the recycling alternatives available.

The following is a comparison between the tonnages of Sligo waste sent to the Ballina landfill in 2002 and the reduced tonnages sent in 2003:



Note: The above figures do not include waste that may have been sent to an alternative landfill. Some Sligo waste went to Ballaghaderreen landfill in 2003.

Waste Regulation

Sligo County Council, under the Waste Management Act, 1996, has a responsibility for the regulation of waste facilities and waste activities, and the enforcement of Regulations made under the Act. These include the Waste Management (Permit) Regulations, 1998, and the Waste Management (Collection Permit) Regulations, 2001.

In 2003, Sligo County Council issued 7 Waste Permits to facilities ranging from vehicle dismantlers to the recovery of inert material.

Mayo County Council, the permitting authority for Connaught for the Waste Collection Permits, issued 21 Waste Collection Permits in 2003. For Sligo, bringing the total number of Waste Collection Permits in Sligo to 90 at the end of 2003. Sligo County Council had an input into all applications received relating to Sligo.

LITTER

The problem of litter in County Sligo continues to be a major challenge for the Council. In 2003, 82 on-the-spot fines were issued for littering offences ranging from cigarette wrappings to domestic refuse illegally dumped on public property. Sixteen files were sent to our solicitor for prosecution and by the end of 2003 the Council had secured 7 successful convictions with fines ranging from €20 to €500. In addition 10 Section 9 Notices under the Litter Pollution Act 1997 were issued to private landowners requiring them to clear their lands of litter, which is visible from a public place.



▲ Litter – a major challenge for the Council and the people of Sligo

During 2003 **Operation Clean Sweep** was introduced on a pilot basis in the towns of Tubbercurry and Ballymote. Under section 6 of the Litter Pollution Act 1997, occupiers of premises fronting onto the footway within the town limits are obliged to keep the area in front of their premises free of litter. Not to do so is an offence and can attract a fine of €125.00. **Operation Clean Sweep** involved the Environmental Awareness Officer visiting local business in both towns and advising them of their obligations under the Litter Pollution Act. This was followed by twice weekly inspections by the Litter Warden. In general business people co-operated fully with the Litter Warden and the whole operation helped to increase peoples' awareness of the problem as well as their own obligations with regard to litter. It also resulted in cleaner streets! It is hoped that Operation Clean Sweep will be expanded into Collooney and Grange in 2004.

Towards the end of 2003 the Litter Warden addressed the problem of illegal signage on approach roads to towns and villages, and a number of on-the-spot fines issued. Under Section 19 of the Litter Pollution Act 1997, the placing of advertising materials on any structures, poles, posts etc. visible from a public place is illegal, save for a few exceptions e.g. election posters, circus posters etc. It is intended that throughout 2004 that the Council's Policy on advertising signage be developed and that the problem of illegal signs littering the approach roads will be a thing of the past!

Environmental Services

In 2003 anti-litter efforts were augmented by increasing awareness, enforcement and street cleaning. The Environmental Awareness Officer tackled this issue during public meetings, along with visits to commercial premises and schools. Other student activities organised in 2003, included visits to illegal dumpsites in local peat land areas to view first hand the destructive effects of littering and dumping. Surveys, project work and presentations were also undertaken in cooperation with the Environmental Awareness Officer.

As usual the month of April was dedicated to promoting the National Anti-litter Campaign, **National Spring Clean**, in 2003 a total of 105 groups participated in local cleanup events. Sligo County Council also allocated €13,500 to community based projects that focused on anti-litter efforts under the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Governments annual grant scheme.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

The Environmental Awareness Officer continued to prioritise responsible waste management as a focus for 2003. This was largely achieved through the provisions of public meetings, school visits, presentations to community and residents groups, and discussion with members of the business community on waste management options. The main areas of discussion included litter management, the waste management hierarchy and 3Rs (reduce, reuse & recycle), composting demonstrations and different methods including vermin-composting, use of local bring banks and how to avail of and use the dry recyclable kerbside collection now accessible in areas of Sligo. Regular use of local media was also extensively employed to promote greater environmental awareness, with numerous articles, interviews and advertisements provided. In particular local media has served to highlight issues such as illegal dumping and littering.

Green Schools Programme

In 2003, 12 new schools registered with the Green Flag Programme. From a total of 63 national schools in Co. Sligo, this brings the percentage involved in this environmental programme to 44%. Flags are awarded to schools that embody progressive waste management strategies, gain litter free status, become energy aware and make efforts to conserve and protect water sources. This programme is designed to change fundamental attitudes amongst young people to the problems of waste, litter energy and water wastage.



▲ Students and teachers from St. Aiden's N.S., Monasteraden receiving their Green Flag

In 2003, four new Green Flags were awarded by Minister of State in the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Pat "the Cope" Gallagher to Killavil N.S. Ballymote, St. Molaise's N.S. Grange, Stokane N.S., Enniscrone and St. Enda N.S., Carrarroe. This brings the total number of Green Flags flying in Co. Sligo to eight.



◀ Children with environmentalist Eanna Ní Lamhna pictured at an awards ceremony in Dublin

Other national initiatives that were locally promoted throughout 2003 included National Tree Week (March), A Green Christmas Campaign (January) for the recycling of seasonal packaging and shredding of Christmas Trees, National Recycling week (October), Blue Flag Awareness activities during the Summer season also included litter clean ups, beach safety demonstrations along with walk and talk events discussing the coastal features.

Environmental Services

WATER SAFETY

During 2003, Sligo County Council provided a Beach Guard Service on 5 beaches – full time on Enniscrone, Mullaghmore and Rosses Point beaches and weekends only on Dunmorán and Streedagh beaches. A beach warden service for Strandhill is also operated throughout the summer months.

FOOD SAFETY

Sligo County Council entered into a new 3-year service contract with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) at the beginning of 2003. This contract, which is common to all local authorities, forms the basis of much of the work of the Local Authority Veterinary Service.

There are currently 3 abattoirs under the supervision of Sligo County Council. The council is required to carry out pre- and post- slaughter checks on all animals, along with continuous monitoring of hygiene and welfare standards and BSE controls. All 3 abattoirs were audited by the FSAI (Food Safety Authority Ireland) in 2003 on their controls on SRM (Specified Risk Material) and all were placed in top category. Sligo County Council also took part in a pilot programme run by the FSAI and the Local Authority Veterinary Service, which aims to standardise the inspection process nationwide. This involved the introduction of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and new forms. The programme is currently in its second phase and its progress will be reviewed in 2004.

At the end of 2003, one of the three Small Meat Manufacturing plants under the supervision of Sligo County Council was in the final stages of compiling its application to the FSAI for the new national health mark. This involved a considerable investment in time and money by the plant in updating its procedures and documentation. It is hoped that this application will be lodged in early 2004. The FSAI would hope to have all plants registered by the end of 2004. A standardisation programme similar to that introduced in the abattoirs is just getting underway for these plants. Sligo County Council is also participating in this programme.

The inspection of liquid milk producers continued throughout the year. All producers were inspected in 2003 and will be visited again in 2004. The number of producers is expected to fall as the effects of the CAP Mid-Term review filter through in the next 2-3 years.

ANIMAL WELFARE

The Control of Dogs Act, The Control of Horses Act and Sheep Scab orders (Diseases of Animals Act) form the main body of animal welfare legislation.

Control of Dogs

The dog warden service for Sligo and Leitrim has been operated by the ISPCA for a number of years now. However towards the end of 2003 Leitrim County Council gave notice that they intended to withdraw from the arrangement from January 2004. This will obviously have implications for Sligo. Negotiations took place at the end of 2003 with the ISPCA on the arrangements for 2004. There were a total of 2,535 dog licences issued in 2003. A reminder system will be introduced using the current database and part of the discussions with the ISPCA will include increased enforcement activity.

Control of Horses



While stray horses are not a major issue in the county there are concerns in certain areas particularly in the Borough and surrounding areas. With this in mind it was decided during 2003 to introduce new byelaws, which will make enforcement of the Control of Horses Act easier. These byelaws will create control zones in Sligo Borough and in certain other areas of the county. Horses in a control zone will require a licence and electronic identification. Where stray horses are impounded it will be up to the owner to demonstrate that proper facilities exist for stabling/grazing the animal. The byelaws will contain exemptions for certain classes of horse owner. The aim of these byelaws is to target irresponsible horse owners. It is hoped to have these measures adopted in 2004.

Sheep Scab Orders

Any suspected sheep scab cases will continue to be investigated as reported. The number of reported cases is low. However it is thought that the prevalence of the disease is higher than reported.

Rural Water Programme

2003 was a very busy and productive year for the Rural Water Programme in Sligo. In the last year the Water Services section of Sligo County Council administered an allocation of over €2.5 million for the county...

Group Water Schemes	1,500,000
Small Schemes	500,000
Takeover and upgrading of schemes	550,000
Design / Build / Operate (DBO) projects	100,000
Total	€2,650,000



Work on a number of Group Water Schemes has been completed, including Castletown, Carrowmoran, Lackagh, Carrickbanagher and Carrowloban. Work on the upgrading of the Ballintogher Group Water Scheme is also well advanced.

Sligo County Council has been successful in obtaining substantial funding from the Department facilitating the upgrading of Stages 1 and extension of the Geevagh/Highwood Group Water Scheme which supplies approximately 484 properties.

Stage 1 of the scheme consisted of an Intake Pumphouse, Rising Mains, a 227m³ Reservoir and Pumping Station. An extension of Stage 1 has since been approved which involves the laying of laying a 250mm OD trunk main from the proposed treatment works site to Moytirra Reservoir metres and a 180mm OD trunk main from Moytirra Reservoir. The successful contractors for Stage 1 of the scheme were P & S Civil Works.

Work on Stage 2 of the scheme is due to commence in 2004. This contract which is being carried out by Carty Contractors Limited includes the laying of 9,548 metres of 180mm OD gravity main to the proposed reservoir at Aghoo and 1,632 metres of 180mm OD mains from Aghoo to Drumnasoohy and a storage reservoir at Aghoo.

The estimated cost of the scheme is €2.3m

Work is also nearing completion on the upgrading of Ballygawley Group Water Scheme at a cost of €1.4 million, and it is proposed to connect the Ballygawley and Ballintogher Schemes to the Sligo and Environs Scheme in Autumn 2004. This work which consists of the Provision of a Booster Pumping Station, a 455m³ reservoir, approximately 9,062 metres of pipelines and ancillary works is being carried by P. Clarke & Sons Limited.

Upgrading works on the Culfadda Group Water Scheme has also been approved at an estimated cost of €250,000. There are 170 houses, 12 farms and 3 commercial properties on this Scheme and the successful contractors are P&S Civil Works.

Work will get underway in 2004 on the Castlebaldwin Group Water Scheme at a cost of €228,000 and the Benbulbin Group Water Scheme costing €250,000. Work will also commence on Group Water Schemes at Fuel/Drimbane, Rathgoonane and Belclare, and Sligo County Council will be taking over and upgrading and Coney/Stonehall Group Water Scheme in the current year.

Expression of interest have been received for three sewerage schemes – Ballisodare, Cloonacool and Aclare and these are being examined.

Funding has been sought in respect of advance works for proposed schemes at Keash, Drum East and Keellogoboy.

Group schemes are at planning stage for the provision of group schemes to serve the Doo/Knockminna, Gleann/Kinnagrelly, Coolaney Road,

Glack and Ballintogher/Drumahair Road Areas.

The Key element of any Group Water Scheme is the involvement and commitment of all the members. The membership rules ensure the efficient and fair operation of the scheme for the benefit of all the members. The Group Water Scheme is as community-based public utility.

Councillor Gerry Murray, Chairman of Sligo Rural Water Programme Monitoring Committee commented that 'Water is our most valuable natural resource, and it is important that we work closely with the various local communities to help them obtain a proper water supply. Sligo County Council operates what is arguably the most comprehensive Rural Water Programme in the county, and our busy schedule of work will continue throughout 2004.'

Capital Water Projects ♦ Small Sewerage Schemes

COUNTY SLIGO WATER CONSERVATION PROJECTS

Water Conservation activities are being extended to all water schemes throughout County Sligo following the allocation of a further €1.79 million in funding from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

The objectives of the Water Conservation Programme are:

- ▶ to reduce the overall level of water losses in water supply schemes throughout the county
- ▶ to lower operating costs and facilitate improved operational and demand management of water supply infrastructure
- ▶ to improve the level of supply to customers

During 2003 active leak detection work yielded savings of 500m³/day on the North Sligo Water Scheme. The average daily demand in the South Sligo Water Supply Scheme has also been reduced by approximately 265m³/day to date.

COMPLETE INFORMATION SYSTEM – DATA CAPTURE PROJECT

The Local Government Computer Services Board in association with Kerry County Council has developed the Complete Information System software for use in Local Authorities throughout the country. €200,000 has been made available by the Department to Sligo County Council to digitise all water & wastewater networks throughout the county. Data Capture is carried out by means of a GPS (Global Positioning System). It is expected that all public water supply networks will be surveyed and entered into CIS by early 2005.

SLIGO PILOT METERING PROJECT

In order to implement the Government's Water Pricing Framework, local authorities are required to achieve universal metering of the water supplied to non-domestic customers by 2006. Sligo County Council is facilitating a pilot project in association with the Department of the Environment to procure a water metering and billing service through a Design, Build & Operate (DBO) Contract

It is expected that the Tender Process for this Project will be completed in early 2004. The design and installation phase of the project, which will include the installation of 6,500 flow meters has an estimated cost of €4 million and will be of approximately 15-18 months duration. The operation & maintenance phase will be for 10 years.

SLIGO AND ENVIRONS WATER SUPPLY SCHEME

The Sligo and Environs Water Supply Scheme is dedicated to providing real benefits for everybody who lives, works or visits the region, ensuring a better, cleaner environment for all.

Funding of €31.5m was allocated to Stage 1 of the project in the 5 year period 1998 to 2003, works including...

- ▶ Weir and footbridge at Riverside
- ▶ Foxes Den Treatment Works
- ▶ Installing 36 km of new pipelines to the borough of Sligo
- ▶ Refurbishment of Carns Hill Treatment works
- ▶ Provision of new reservoir at Rosses Point and upgraded pipelines in Rosses Point and Strandhill



▲ Meter installation for water conservation project

SMALL SEWERAGE SCHEMES

Monasteraden Sewerage Scheme

Sligo County Council constructed a new extended aeration treatment plant for 400 pe (population equivalent), which consisted of circular aeration basin, settlement tank, grass plots, access road, fencing and associated pipe work. 1600 metres of 225 mm diameter of sewerage mains were laid through the village. The total cost of the sewerage scheme was €710,000.00

Ballisodare Wastewater Treatment Works

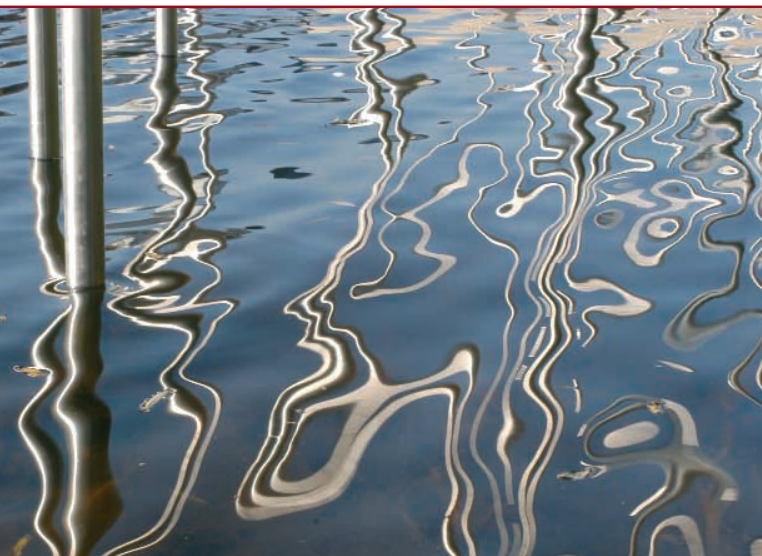
Sligo County Council sought and obtained 'Part 8' planning for wastewater treatment plant for 4,500 pe in Ballisodare. A new 2.4 metre high palisade fence was erected around the boundary for the treatment works site. Site Investigation works were also carried out in 2003.

Cloonacool/Aclare Waste Water Treatment Works

Sligo County Council sought and obtained a part 8 planning for new wastewater treatment works for ultimate design capacity for 1,000 pe. Site investigation works were also carried out during the year at these sites.

Arts Office

The County Sligo Arts Plan 2002-2005 "The Brightening Air" holds a broad and inclusive vision for arts development in the county.



▲ Top: St. Annes Community Centre.
Bottom: Trading Places / C.R.E.A.T.E. – Creativity and Exchange through Arts & Technology in Education. Kids' Own Publishing Partnership 2004.

▲ Art on the water reflects in River Garavogue

The Arts Office is continuing to implement the plan and meet the long-term goals which articulate the strategic role of the Sligo local authorities both in terms of the Arts Office's programme, and the broader role played by the County Council in supporting artists, arts organisations and arts development generally both directly and indirectly.

The Arts Office has initiated and developed a number of programmes in the area of Arts and Health, working with a number of organisations such as the North Western Health Board, Sligo Sports & Recreation Partnership, Active Age Groups, St Anne's Community Centre to improve the quality of people's experience of arts in these contexts.

For example the Arts Office co-ordinated a very successful programme of events in the county during May as part of Bealtaine, the festival which celebrates creativity in older age.

Arts in both formal and informal education contexts forms a large part of the work of the Arts Office including the professional development of those involved in various capacities – artists, workers, voluntary groups and organisations. Programmes include:

- ▶ the Vogler Quartet in Sligo Music Education Programmes in Schools and Sligo Academy of Music
- ▶ an Advisory/Mentoring Scheme for Sligo-based groups active in drama, writing and art
- ▶ and programmes for visual artists and dance teachers.

Based on the successful model of the Vogler Music Education Programme, the office is collaborating with well-known traditional musician Colm O'Donnell to deliver a Traditional Music Education Programme in 8 National Schools over the coming school year.

County Sligo Youth Theatre comes under the remit of the Arts Office. This organisation for the youth of the county aged between 12 and 21 has developed considerably in recent times and now has its own office and employs a Leader in the Factory Performance Space. The Youth Theatre presents a number of their own productions annually as well as taking part in other community initiatives. In November the group will present a repeat performance of one of their highly successful productions **East of the Sun, West of the Moon**. This production will be staged in the Hawks Well in November, mainly during the day for school groups.

The 5-year Vogler Quartet in Sligo Residency Programme will be ongoing until June 2004. In delivering this programme, the Quartet, the Partners and the Facilitators continue to work closely with local music groups, schools/educational institutions, community centres and venues in the key areas of performance, music education and instrumental tuition.

In addition to the Music Education Programme, which is developing models of arts curriculum support of national relevance, the residency has seen highly successful events as part of the Con Brio Sligo Music Series and the Vogler Spring Festival, an annual event over the May Bank Holiday Weekend.

Vogler Quartet performances for the remainder of 2003 will be in the Con Brio Sligo Music Series and the Model Arts and Niland Gallery Lunchtime Series in October and December.

Arts Office

In 2003 the Arts Office introduced a new Projects Fund Scheme for the development and production of a significant artistic project. 5 such projects were successful in this first year of the Scheme, in the areas of music, multi-disciplinary and the visual arts. In 2003, €184,000 was provided by the members of Sligo County Council in direct grant aid to professional arts organisations, community arts events and small residency bursaries to individuals.

The Arts Office is also responsible for managing Sligo Local Authorities' Public Art Programme, in consultation with relevant departments.

The Arts Office produces Sligo Events Quarterly, a quarterly publication which services to inform the public and assist arts organisations in publicising their events.

The Artist in Context Programme was designed to contribute to the professional development of practicing artists who wish to work in social contexts. A series of lectures and workshops explored the role of the artist and the arts in the following settings: multicultural, community, disability, health, education and the gallery (in partnership with Sligo Leader Partnership Company).



▲ *The Shadow of the Face :*
Multimedia Maps Project 2003

Intergenerational Arts in partnership with the North Western Health Board

An Arts & Health programme took place in St. Anne's for older people who attend day care in a community setting. Students and older members of two communities work creatively together in weekly workshops in local schools. The Maugherow Project takes place in a rural location in St. Patrick's National School, Maugherow and involves older people and primary school students working together with professional artists. Abbeyquarter Intergenerational Project takes place in an urban location in the Mercy Convent Primary School, Sligo.

▼ Maugherow Project 2003 exhibition opening *Hand Me Down*



Community & Enterprise

During 2003 the Office of Community & Enterprise continued to develop and build on Sligo County Council's role in community development.

The various programmes delivered e.g. the Urban and Village Renewal Programme, CLÁR Urban Enhancement Programme, the PEACE II County Council led Task Force involve local communities in the economic and social regeneration of their areas through partnership and consultation.

It also assisted in the further development of the Community Forum, and increased its involvement in co-operating with other agencies to work for the socio economic development of the county through its involvement with the RAPID Programme, Team Sligo, County Childcare Committee, the Sports Partnership, County Enterprise Board, Sligo LEADER Partnership and other working groups and committees.

The Office of Community & Enterprise is also involved in the areas of Tourism Development, Tidy Towns and the provision and maintenance of Burial Grounds. During 2003 confirmation of funding from the Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources for the design and construction of a fibre ring on a phased basis around Sligo Town. The possibility of providing wireless broadband to other towns in the county is also being explored.

COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR GRANT SCHEME 2003

Sligo County Council provided an allocation of €50,000 for the Community & Voluntary Grant Scheme in 2003.

The Scheme assisted community-based projects carried out during the year under the following headings:

General public interest
Events
Activities
Cultural and heritage development projects
Tidy Towns/Villages enhancement projects
Enhancement of graveyards

The Community & Voluntary Grant Scheme 2003 attracted 97 valid applications of which 72 were allocated funds. The applicants were from a wide and varied selection of community and voluntary organisation working in the county. The level of interest and numbers of applications received during 2003 shows the high levels of community and voluntary activity in the county. It is hoped that the Grant Scheme can grow and develop over the coming years and continue to support the valued work of community and voluntary activities in the county.

The following applications were recommended for funding under the Community and Voluntary Sector Grant Scheme 2003:

Community & Voluntary Organisations	€
Samaritans	10000
Aclare St. Patrick's Day Parade	500
Ballinacarrow Community Centre	500
Ballintogher Traditional Music Festival	300
Ballymote Family Resource Centre	200
Ballymote Youth Steering Group	350
Banada Community Centre Committee	500
Beltorc Curry Moylough Development	250
Beltra Show Committee	250
Calry Show Committee	250
CLASP	200
Cloonacool Community Centre	500
Culfadda Agricultural Show	300
Cully Ball Alley Restoration Committee	640
Dromore West Community Council Ltd.	500
Enniscrone & District Comm.Dev.	5000
Geevagh Community Residents	250
Killavil Development Group	500
Monasteraden Community Development	250
Monasteraden Ladies Group	200
Mullaghmore Active Development Association	250
Mullinabreena Community Group	500
North Sligo Agricultural Show Society	400
Ox Mountain Hill Sheep Dev. Assoc.	300
Radharc na Mara Community	200
Riverstown Enterprise Association	300
Shroof Ball Alley/ Community Development Group	640
Skreen & Dromard Community Council	250
Sligo Community Games	1200
Sligo Feis Ceoil	800
Sligo Music Festival	1000
Sligo Rocks Ltd	1000
St. Michael's Womens Development Group	200
Templevanney Lake District Development Group	400
Tidy Towns Applications (14 No.)	10010
Burial Grounds Applications (26 No.)	10010

Community & Enterprise

SLIGO COMMUNITY FORUM

Sligo Community Forum, established in March 2000, is a representative body of community groups and voluntary organisations active and operating in County Sligo. It provides a platform for affiliated community and voluntary groups to exchange information, share experiences, and work collectively to voice issues and concerns relating to economic, social and cultural development of the county.

Some of the many Community Forum activities in 2003 included:

- ▶ Official launch of the County Community Forum and the Funding Directory.
- ▶ Organisation and facilitating of area meetings around the county to build up the participation of Community Groups in the Forum and to discuss issues relevant to local groups.
- ▶ The development of a communication action strategy to keep community groups informed of the work the Forum is carrying out on their behalf.
- ▶ Working with various agencies to increase the number of Community Development Programmes in the County.
- ▶ Continue the Community & Voluntary representation on various County Committees.



▲ Members of Sligo County Community Forum

Back Row: Blair Feeney, Paddy Sexton, Margaret Conlon, Frank Kiely, Sharon Boles, Ann Donegan, Roisin McGlone, Gerry Lundy.

Front Row: Syl Mulligan, Noreen Cremin, Antoinette Mahon, Tom McGettrick, Lillian Scanlon, Bernadette Devine.

Absent: Rita Ann Burke and Bernadette Comisky.



◀ Sligo County Community Forum

Directory of Funding Agencies for Community Groups in County Sligo

COMHAIRLE NA NÓG

As part of Sligo County Development Board's role in co-ordinating the implementation of the National Children's Strategy within the county, a Comhairle na nÓg or Young Persons Dáil was held on the 8th May, 2003.

The purpose of the Comhairle na nÓg was to

- ▶ Select representation to attend the 2003 Dáil na nÓg (ages 12-17). This took place in November, 2003. Dáil na Páistí (ages 7-12) will take place in 2004.
- ▶ Consult with children on issues of local and national importance.
- ▶ Facilitate the establishment of permanent structures in the Sligo area to ensure that children are given a voice in matters that affect them.

Invitations to attend Comhairle na nÓg were forwarded to all primary and secondary schools in county Sligo. The event was a huge success with 133 representatives from 15 national and 8 secondary schools from around the county.

The first part of the event took place in Council Chamber where the Cathaoirleach welcomed the delegates. Delegates were given a presentation on the functions and role of the council members and the services provided by Sligo County Council.



▲ Representing Sligo at Dáil na nÓg
L-R: John Bell, Aoife Cawley, Noelle Carroll, Bláithín Gallagher

The second part of the event took place at St. Anne's Youth Centre. The participants were divided into seven groups/workshops facilitated by staff of the Sligo County Council, Sligo County Childcare Committee and independent facilitators. Discussion took place regarding issues of importance to the youth of Sligo County.

Community & Enterprise

Selection of Students - to attend national Comhairle na nÓg/ Dáil na nÓg

The selection process was devised by the students participating in the initiative. Each group selected the person whom they thought would best represent Sligo at a national level, this was done by secret ballot.

The Representatives/delegates selected to represent Sligo at Dáil na nÓg were:

Blaíthín Gallagher <i>Ursuline College</i>	Ruth Feeney <i>Sligo Grammar School</i>
Aoife Cawley <i>Ursuline College</i>	John Bell <i>Sligo Grammar School</i>

The Representatives/delegates selected to represent Sligo at Dáil na Páistí were:

Laura Taheny <i>Ransboro N.S.</i>	Shauna Browne <i>Dromore West N.S.</i>
Shane Dunne <i>Cloonacool N.S.</i>	Enda Mullaney <i>Killavil N.S.</i>
Ross Henry <i>Grange N.S.</i>	

Dáil na nÓg

Dáil na nÓg is the National Youth Parliament of Ireland, and forms part of the **National Children's Strategy "Our Children – Their Lives"** which was launched by An Taoiseach Mr Bertie Ahern in November 2000. The key objective of the Strategy is to improve the quality of children's lives in Ireland over the ten years from 2000 to 2010. The first goal of the Strategy is to give children a voice in matters which affect them. Dáil na nÓg is a measure identified in the Strategy to progress this goal. The delegates will let the decision makers in the Government know what they think of issues that affect their daily lives.

A formal invitation was extended to the Sligo representatives by Mr Brian Lenihan, TD, Minister of State with Special Responsibility for Children.

The four Secondary School students Blaíthín Gallagher, Ruth Feeney, Aoife Cawley, and John Bell attended the third sitting of Dail na nÓg on 15th November, accompanied by Marie Brennan from the Community and Enterprise Department of Sligo County Council. The 'Dail' convened in the Hogan Stand Conference Centre, Croke Park Stadium. Minister Lenihan and other Government Ministers were in attendance on the day.

Views of delegates from Sligo

Dáil na nÓg was a day to remember. It was very motivating and views and opinions were listened to and taken on board. The delegates had the chance to discuss the problems and issues of concern to them and they felt that for the first time as young people the government acknowledged the valuable input they can make. The main points discussed were Alcohol and Drug Abuse and Educational Disadvantage. Following this programme the students are confident that their views, opinions and solutions are taken into account in shaping the future of Ireland.

TIDY TOWNS

Each year a number of communities in Sligo take part in the national Tidy Towns competition, which is organised by the Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government. The principal sponsor of the competition is SuperValu.



▲ Riverstown - 'Highly Commended'

County Awards

Best Town/Village in the county

Coolaney once again received the award for securing the highest mark in the county.

Riverstown was highly commended.

Ballintogher was commended.

SuperValu Endeavour Award

This award is presented to acknowledge the town or village in each county which has made the greatest improvement on its performance over last year. In 2003 the winner was *Ballymote*.

Best Shopfront Awards

Mullarkey's, Banada-Tourlestrane was awarded the regional award for making the best effort to preserve a traditional shopfront.

The local groups who carry out the work in each village are extremely committed to the betterment of their area and in recognition of this effort Sligo County Council provides a fund under the Community & Voluntary Grants scheme to assist them in their efforts.

Community & Enterprise

The overall results of towns and villages throughout Sligo were:

Category	Population	Town / Village	2002	2003	% Increase
A	200 or less	Ballinacarrow	180	182	1.11
		Ballintogher	217	221	1.84
		Banada-Tourlestrane	166	172	3.61
		Carney	210	216	2.86
		Coolaney	231	235	1.73
		Easkey	194	191	—
		Mullaghmore	194	199	2.58
		B	201-1000	Ballisodare	206
Collooney	163			170	4.29
Enniscrone	173			184	6.36
Grange	201			206	2.49
Gurteen	171			not entered	—
Riverstown	218			223	2.29
Rosses Point	179			207	3.50
C	1001-2500			Ballymote	179

TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND BROADBAND

In 2003 Sligo County Council received confirmation of funding from the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources for the design and construction of a fibre ring or Metropolitan Area Network (MAN) on a phased basis around Sligo Town.

Phase 1 will include the design of an entire MAN's network and a staged construction (stage 1 not exceed 5KM) around Sligo Town.

Phase 2 will include the construction of the remainder of the network.

The design of the network will link up all of the main business and technology parks, educational institutions, hospitals, libraries and major demand beneficiaries etc. The MAN network will also incorporate a co-location facility or POP Centre (Point of Presence) an interconnect point for national and global carriers.

The approximate cost of Phase 1 of this project will be in the region of €1m–€1.5m.

The design of the network will commence in February 2004. Actual construction of the MAN's should commence in mid 2004 with estimated completion time of the 5KM network in Autumn 2004.

WIRELESS BROADBAND

Initiatives are underway to provide wireless broadband to a number of rural towns in the county.

Under the CLÁR initiative the towns of Enniscrone and Tubbercurry are being addressed, while ICBAN is making an application for funding under INTERREG II for the provision of wireless broadband for rural towns for which Ballymote is included in Sligo.

SLIGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Integrated Economic Social and Cultural Strategy for county Sligo (2002-2012)

Sligo CDB launched its integrated strategy in Economic, Social & Cultural Development in April 2002. The Strategy is founded on extensive and widespread consultation and drew on the expertise of representatives from the various State Agencies, the Social Partners, and the Community & Voluntary Sector over a two-year period. The County Development Board held five meetings in 2003 and four implementation working group meetings, the implementation working groups were set up to monitor the implementation of the Strategy. The Office of Community & Enterprise also organised three training days for CDB members and key individuals within the different stakeholder agencies on the Cora project management/project vision software system.

Key Goals of the CDB Strategy include:

- ▶ The development of a critical mass of infrastructure.
- ▶ Developments in enterprise, industry, agriculture, retail and tourism that maximise opportunities and employment potential in an environmentally sustainable way.
- ▶ The development of a co-ordinated and multi-agency approach in tackling the structural and attitudinal barriers surrounding social inclusion.
- ▶ The promotion of Sligo's cultural life while balancing accessibility and development with the need to protect and preserve the county's heritage and unique environment.

Community & Enterprise

TeleCommunication Advisory Working Group

An interagency approach has been taken to the development of broadband in Sligo. In this regard Sligo County Council has taken a lead role in

- ▶ Securing funding for the initial construction (5km) of a metropolitan area network around Sligo Town.
- ▶ Supported the local community of Enniscrone and Killala in their bid for wireless broadband.
- ▶ Supported Tubbercurry Chamber of Commerce in its bid for wireless broadband under CLÁR initiative.
- ▶ Worked with ICBAN in preparing a cross border proposal for broadband to be submitted under Interreg III Programme.

TEAM SLIGO

Sligo County Development Board established TEAM Sligo in October 2002 to examine how agencies can work in partnership towards improving the "face of Sligo Town" for potential investors and tourists and enhancing civic pride in the area. TEAM Sligo in 2003 set out their activities key outcomes of the plan include:

- ▶ Erection of Blue Parking Signs at key location to channel traffic,
- ▶ A number of initiatives to create pleasant visual on vacant properties,
- ▶ Meeting with fast food outlets to address the night time littering problem,
- ▶ A design statement for Sligo town,
- ▶ A pilot programme whereby litter wardens can work after hours

2003

With the successful launch of the Integrated Economic, Social and Cultural Strategy for County Sligo in 2002 the focus in 2003 was on developing a structure to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the actions in the plan. A number of training days were organised targeted at CDB members and key individuals within the different stakeholder agencies on the project management/project vision software system designed for the implementation process. To date there has been considerable progress on the implementation of actions within the Strategy with agencies inputting into the system on a regular basis.

Sligo CDB in 2004 will be progressing the new joint Ministerial initiatives introduced to reform and develop best practice in Local Development Agencies. The CDB will be co-ordinating a number of initiatives including the endorsement of local Development agencies annual action plans, developing proposals for improved cohesion/ funding for co-ordinating measures, and developing Integrated Target Group Plans. The CDB in 2004 will be working in partnership with local development agencies on improving and sustaining the quality of services provided to targeted social groups in the county.

BURIAL GROUNDS

There are 64 burial grounds in the county under Council control, however there are a number of these where no interments have taken place in recent years. Other areas are experiencing a shortage of space so there is ongoing work in locating land for burial grounds and providing extensions to existing burial grounds. During 2003 work was progressed in relation to providing extensions at a number of burial grounds, including Cloghermore, Calry and Kilglass.

The Council employ a Registrar for each burial ground; The registrars are an invaluable source of information for people who are tracing ancestors or compiling local histories as the records they hold span generations and also contain maps of the graveyards from which individual plots can be identified.

In recent years the increased awareness among local communities of the importance of burial grounds has inspired many burial ground clean-up schemes.

The Council, in 2003 provided €10,000 under the Community & Voluntary Grants Scheme to assist local committees in their work, 26 local committees availed of the grant. It is hoped to involve community groups to an even greater extent in the area of burial grounds in future years.

County Sligo Civil Defence

2003 was an exceptionally hectic year for Sligo Civil Defence!

The Organisation progressed from covering 14 local events in 2002 to 32 events in 2003, involving the participation of 324 volunteers. This is by no means an easy feat when it is taken into account that all the Civil Defence personnel's time was given voluntarily to assist the community.

Sligo Civil Defence volunteers were to the fore in assisting at the Special Olympics opening and closing ceremonies in June. This event held over 2 weekends and 25 volunteers at a time from Sligo attended each ceremony. A lot of hard work went into the preparation of these games. It was a first for Ireland and the first time they were held out side of the U.S. In July Westlife played their first concert in Sligo where Civil Defence was again involved in the roles of stewarding and first aid.

Both of these events being a once off had to be catered to and at the same time our regular events could not be put on the back burner, and the Civil Defence volunteers came through with flying colours. When asked to assist the answer was

▶ *'No problem just tell us when and where'*

Organisation development continued with active recruitment at every opportunity, resulting in 15 new volunteers joining at the return of the winter training sessions in October. Our overall plan is to maintain our numbers of volunteers at the level we have become accustomed to in order to be in a position to answer the call of duty when required.

The Sligo team travelled Strokestown in May for the Regional Pump Drill competition where Cavan came out on top; Sligo Civil Defence was also represented in Carlow at National final, and returned to Cavan in October to take part in the National exercise with teams from Dublin, Kildare, Galway, Donegal, Offaly and Roscommon. This annual event is very important in the volunteers' calendar where they get the opportunity to put their skills to the task and at the same time learn new ways to master new skills. It also provides us with an opportunity to network with our counterparts from around the country and share news and ideas.

UHF and VHF marine radio training was held this year with 17 volunteers taking and passing the UHF examination from which 5 were successful in being accepted to progress to further training in Dublin. Eight volunteers attended the Marine VHF radio course and successfully obtaining a licence to operate this facility.

Five volunteers completed their advanced first aid training and exams, which brings them to ambulance level in first aid. Six successfully completed their intermediate first aid exams.

Civil Defence volunteers were honoured in being nominated for a Cathaoirleach's award for their outstanding contribution to the community and were presented with their certificate at a function hosted by the Cathaoirleach in May 2003.

During October / November Civil Defence instructors ran 2 x 3 day Occupational first aid courses for staff and 2 x 1 day courses for the curious with 18 staff members qualifying as Occupational first aiders. Certificates to be issued to the successful participants at a later stage.

It is planned to hold a training workshop day in the winter of 2004 which is open to all volunteers and will give both the new and seasoned volunteers the opportunity to see what various skills are available within the organisation, and this will be followed by the presentation of certificates to the successful volunteers and long service medals (10 year and 20 year).

The new Civil Defence Board came into being this year and is making great strides in correlating input from all sectors, including the volunteers, in putting a strategy together to identify the short and medium term goals for the organisation. This will see many changes and it is hoped that the volunteers will continue to give of their time so freely for the betterment of the organisation, and that the organisation will continue to recognise the commitment and dedication of the volunteers in assisting their local and the wider community.

▼ Members of Sligo Civil Defence on a training exercise



Communications ♦ Freedom of Information

In 2003 the Communications Office provided information services to the Elected members, staff and media as well as providing administrative support to the Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH'S AWARDS SCHEME

This scheme was devised to acknowledge and reward people who have given special service to their community. The third series of awards were hosted in County Hall, and the category winners were:

Arts	Coolera Dramatic Society
Community	Jim Eccles
Environment	Rathcormac Residents Association
National Schools	Ballintogher National School
Sports	Theresa Kiernan

The winner of the overall 2003 Cathaoirleach's Awards was **Jim Eccles**.



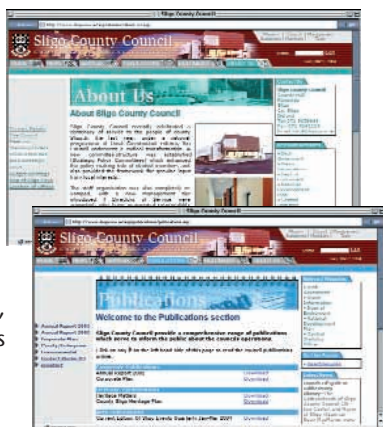
▲ Former winners of the Cathaoirleach's Awards Scheme pictured with members of the Awards Committee

STAFF NEWSLETTER

Four issues of staff newsletter were produced by the Communications Office in conjunction with the Partnership Facilitator and the staff of Sligo Borough Council. As well as being circulated to elected members and retired staff, an edition of the newsletter is posted on the website for the general public. In 2004 it is intended to publish a monthly update to the newsletter – e-Contact will be issued to staff and Elected members by e-mail, and a printed version will be made available for staff and retired staff without access to computers.

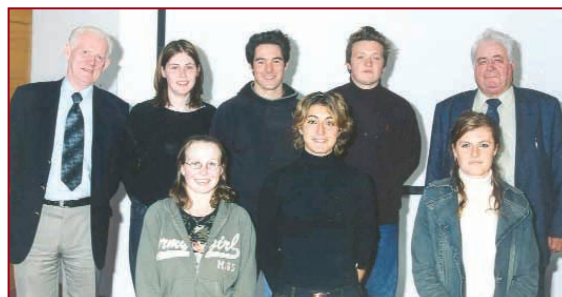
WEBSITE

The Communications Office worked with staff in IT section to maintain and develop Sligo County Council's website. The site is regularly updated with news and information, and features a weekly roads and traffic report, diary of events, minutes of Council meetings and weekly planning lists.



OPEN LOCAL GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE

During 2003 the Council hosted visits from schools throughout the county as part of our 'Open Local Government Initiative.' The students were given a presentation on the work carried out by the Council, participated in a Question and Answer session, and attended a meeting of the Council.



▲ European Students from IT Sligo visit Council Chamber

Among the schools taking part in the programme were St Attracta's National School Tubbercurry and the Business Studies and European Studies classes in Sligo Institute of Technology.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Freedom of Information legislation was introduced in 1997 to provide the following rights..

- ▶ The right of access to official records held by public bodies
- ▶ The right to have personal information corrected or updated if is incomplete, incorrect or misleading.
- ▶ The right to be given reasons for decisions taken by public bodies that affect them.

The Freedom of Information (Amendment Act) 2003 introduced new charges for processing FOI requests –

▶ Initial request for information	€15
▶ Internal review of decision	€75
▶ Review by Information Commissioner	€150

Of the 39 FOI requests processed in 2003, 28 were granted and 11 were refused.

▶ Browse our website at www.sligococo.ie

County Sligo Library Service

Tubbercurry Community Library opened its doors to the public on Monday August 18th 2003. Located in the One-Stop-Shop in Humbert Street in Tubbercurry, it is open 44 hours per week, including one late evening and a Saturday.

In the 4 months to the end of year, Tubbercurry Community Library registered 2,200 members and issued 17,420 items. A wide range of activities also took place including exhibitions, presentations and workshops.

Prior to opening the library to the public in August, 2 members of staff together with Sligo County Librarian, Mr. Donal Tinney hosted a Public Consultation Meeting on June 18th. The purpose of the meeting was to afford members of the local community an opportunity to view the library space and to discuss proposed services. The new library also hosted an Art Exhibition comprising over 200 paintings and drawings during the month of June to celebrate the Special Olympics. The exhibition was opened on June 13th by Sligo County Council's Leas-Cathaoirleach, Cllr Gerry Murray.

EXHIBITIONS 2003

The Fuji Masterpiece Collection Exhibition, which consisted of 20 award winning images, was on display from November 1st to 14th 2003.

An exhibition entitled '16 Days of Action' highlighting the issue of Domestic Violence ran between November 25th and December 16th 2003

The 2002 ESB Environmental Awards Photographic Exhibition, which consisted of 60 award winning images, was on display from December 1st-19th 2003.

SCHOOL VISITS



▲ School visit to Tubbercurry Community Library

A number of class visits took place during the first 4 months of opening. During these visits, staff members provided a tour of the library, a brief introduction to Internet facilities and assistance in choosing material. There were visits from 17 Primary Schools in the surrounding area and also a number of class visits from pupils attending St. Attracta's Secondary School. 3 Playschools in the area visited and staff provided Storytime Sessions for the children.

▼ Jo-anne Brennan, 1st Customer at Tubbercurry Community Library 18 August 2003 receiving her book from Pauline Brennan Executive Librarian. Also pictured is Cathaoirleach Cllr Joe Cawley



County Sligo Library Service

PRESENTATIONS

On the evening of September 17th, Tubbercurry Community Library facilitated Tubbercurry Women's Group in holding an open evening. The evening was an opportunity to display the group's creative work and to welcome potential members.

On November 13th, author and historian, Ultan Cowley provided a two hour presentation on the subject of 'The Men Who Built Britain' – The Irish in Britain. Over 100 people were in attendance.

ART WORKSHOPS

A six week Art Workshop aimed at children in the 4-6 age group commenced on October 9th 2003. This Art Workshop was facilitated by a local artist and covered such topics as Painting, Printing, Clay Work and Collage.

CHILDRENS BOOK FESTIVAL

A number of different activities were organised to celebrate Children's Book Festival 2003. They included a visit by author Oisín McGann, 2 workshops on an Environmental theme entitled 'Loose Leaves in the Library', an Art Workshop for children wishing to submit an entry in the 'Design a Bookmark' competition, a table quiz and other fun activities to celebrate Lá Gaelige on October 24th and a Halloween Fancy Dress Competition and Face Painting event.



▲ Tubbercurry Community Library



▲ Oisín McGann visits Tubbercurry Community Library



▲ Children, Staff, Mayor, Cathaoirleach and Councillors at the unveiling of the quilt



▲ Commemorative Quilt made by local school children

SCHOOLS PATCHWORK QUILT CEREMONY

December 10th 2003 saw the unveiling ceremony of the Schools Patchwork Quilt Project. The finished Quilt, comprising 9 sections, was officially launched by the Cathaoirleach of Sligo County Council, Cllr. Joe Cawley in a ceremony which involved the 9 participating local schools, local people and a number of local elected representatives.

BOOK CLUB

September saw the inaugural meeting of the Tubbercurry Active Retirement Association Book Club. The Book Club comprises 12 members who meet on the last Thursday of the month to discuss either a specific chosen title, a specific author's work or recent award winning titles.

County Sligo Library Service

ENNISCRONE BRANCH LIBRARY

The new Branch Library in Enniscrone was officially opened on March 26th 2003.

During May, to celebrate 'Bealtaine' – Creativity in Older Age, two separate sessions entitled 'Introduction to the Internet' were provided by library staff to members of the public. These sessions were extremely popular and demand for these type of sessions has increased.

Children from 3rd and 4th class from the local primary school in Enniscrone, together with their teacher, Mrs. Mulligan paid a visit to the library on Friday May 23rd. The children were provided with a tour of the library and assisted in choosing material.

Author Oisín McGann visited Enniscrone Branch Library in October as part of Children's Book Festival 2003. Oisín read from 2 of his recently published titles and demonstrated his skills in illustration for the children present.

COUNTY MUSEUM

The sale of Lissadell House in 2003 along with its contents was an historical moment in the history of Sligo. Sligo County Museum was successful in obtaining a selection of important items from the auction, these acquisitions are now on display in the County Museum alongside other items from the Gore Booth collection.



▲ Sligo winners of the *Design-a-Bookmark* Competition with Cathaoirleach Cllr Cawley

SLIGO BRANCH LIBRARY

On Friday January 17th the prize-giving ceremony for Children's Book Festival 2002 took place. The Cathaoirleach of Sligo County Council, Councillor Pádraig Branley, presented the prizes in Sligo Branch Library, Councillor Leo Conlon presented prizes in Ballymote Branch Library while Councillor Joe Cawley did the honours in Tubbercurry Branch Library.

During March 2003, Sligo Branch Library hosted 3 workshops in conjunction with the North-Western Health Board. These workshops were aimed at pre-school leaders and staff involved in working with pre-school children. The topics covered were Creative Play, Story-Time and Reading.



Tubbercurry One Stop Shop

The new One Stop Shop in Tubbercurry is proving to be a very popular facility with the people of South Sligo. The venture is the first of its kind by Sligo County Council, and represents a major investment by the Local Authority in this part of the county.

The aim of the initiative is to deliver from one premises a co-ordinated range of Local Authority services. In addition to housing an area office for Sligo County Council, the one stop shop also hosts a Motor Taxation Office, Tubbercurry Branch Library, The Courts Service, the North Western Health Board, FAS and the Citizens Information Service. The facility also hosts council chamber and meeting rooms.

The two storey building is located on Humbert Street and covers over 500m². A number of old houses were acquired for the development, and project Architects McCullough Mulvin were anxious that the village's character and urban fabric of the street were preserved.

Director of Services Dorothy Clarke said the facility was a significant undertaking by Sligo County Council, and predicted that it would prove very popular by the people of Tubbercurry and South Sligo.

The location of a **Motor Taxation Office** in Tubbercurry will be particularly welcome. A survey undertaken in 2002 at Motor Tax headquarters in Cleveragh, Sligo, suggested that up to 30% of all its customers would avail of the new office.

One service that has certainly 'hit the ground running' is the new **Tubbercurry Branch Library**. Executive Librarian Pauline Brennan advises that since opening their doors on August 18th, library membership had increased from 254 to in excess of 2000 members by the end of 2003.

Alice O'Rourke, Sligo County Council's **Environmental Education Officer**, outlined the Tubbercurry one-stop shop Environmental policy... *'Our objective in south Sligo is to promote and implement best environmental practice within the Tubbercurry one-stop-shop in the areas of waste, water and energy management.'*

Alice feels that with diverse groups and agencies taking up residence in the facility, it is an opportune time to set down environmental guidelines for those working in or visiting the building.



▲ The Main Entrance Hall

Having been based in premises at Connolly Park, for thirty years, there was a sitting of the **District Court** in Tubbercurry on 23rd July 2003. Justice Oliver McGuinness opened proceedings in their new surroundings by paying tribute to Sligo County Council and the Court Service for having 'the foresight to plan this initiative and the resolve to bring it to fruition'

These sentiments were echoed by Eamon Gallagher on behalf of the Sligo Solicitors, who said the development was finished to a very high standard.

District Court Clerk Bill Cashel said the new facility would also be welcomed by court users *'Any improvement that can make the task of going to court less stressful is to be welcomed. It is clear that the one stop shop has been very well planned and designed – the court offices and consultation rooms have been very well laid out and equipped, and I think particular credit to Administrative Officer James Walsh and County Librarian Donal Tinney for their generous co-operation during this transition.'*

Tubbercurry One Stop Shop

Development Manager of Sligo Citizens Information Service, Joe McElhinney is excited by the prospects for their new South Sligo Office. The Service provides a confidential and independent advice on people's rights and settlements covering a wide range of issues including financial matters, health services, justice and legislation and equality issues. Joe is a great believer in 'the one stop shop concept'

"I have seen it work very well for our office in Donegal, and I have equally high expectations for our service in Tubbercurry. Previously we were based in the health centre in the town, and it is great boost for us to be based in a more central location. There will be a substantial 'spin-off' effect by being housed alongside other agencies. In the short term we will be open one day a week (Thursdays 10.00am-4.00pm), but ultimately our intention is to employ local staff in the Tubbercurry Office and to provide a service five days a week."

Joe explained that the Citizens Information Service is funded by Comhairle (formerly National Social Services Department), which was established to fund and promote Citizens information services throughout the country.

'I expect the Citizen Information Service in Tubbercurry to go from strength to strength, and early indications are that it will be well availed of by the local community.'



▲ Access to Motor Taxation Office and Environmental Services

▼ Looking into the spacious and airy library



Cathaoirleach Cllr Joe Cawley remarked that

'For the people of South Sligo, it can often be very impractical to commute to Sligo to transact their business. In this day and age, customers deserve to have an accessible, professional service, and the One Stop Shop permits the Council to deliver this service. I think you will find over the years that the people of South Sligo will greatly appreciate this service, and indeed it could serve as a model for other such facilities in the future.'

▼ An architectural blend of past and present



Partnership ♦ Higher Education Grants ♦ Register of Electors ♦ Motor Taxation Office

The concept of Partnership was given a boost in 2003 with the launch of Strategic Plan 2003-2005 – ‘Deepening Partnership’ in every local authority.

The Partnership Committee will be endeavouring to spearhead the transition to the new method of Partnership at work.

The Partnership Committee were actively involved in Partnership Projects throughout the year.

- ▶ Extending the mobile welfare units to Enniscrone, Ballymote and Tubbercurry Areas.
- ▶ Long Service Award Functions in Sligo and Enniscrone.
- ▶ Return to Learning Programme continued.
- ▶ Editorial Team of Staff Magazine ‘Contact’ worked with Partnership Committee in producing another four publications.
- ▶ 280 staff availed of the Health Screening Programme.
- ▶ The preparatory work for the Employee Assistance Programme was carried out by a working group.
- ▶ Introduction to Computers for Area Staff.



▲ Health Screening – Geraldine McMahon and Regina Walsh

HIGHER EDUCATION GRANTS

Sligo County Council assisted 393 students under 2002 Higher Education Grants Scheme. There were 147 new applicants and 246 continuing students. The scheme is administered on behalf of the Department of Education and Science.

In 2002, Sligo County Council allocated €64,987 in Social Maintenance Grant assistance.

A total of €1,282,410.19 was allocated in 2002 by Sligo County Council to students in maintenance and fees.

REGISTER OF ELECTORS

The Council prepares the Register of Electors annually. There are 46,377 electors registered on the 2003/2004 Register. The cost of preparing the Register is borne by the council and is estimated to be in €84,000 in 2004.

Number of Electors by Area:	
Ballymote	9,420
Dromore	5,365
Sligo/Drumcliffe	11,528
Sligo/Strandhill	13,066
Tubbercurry	6,998

The Adversarial Approach	The Partnership Approach
Focus on Pay and Conditions	Focus on making organisation better
Mainly union and personnel representations	Personnel and union representatives joined by other managers and employees
Bargaining across the table	Discussion around the table
Solution agreed through compromise or through third parties	Solution agreed through consensus

(Extract from ‘Local Authorities – Partnership at Work’)

MOTOR TAXATION OFFICE

Sligo Motor Tax with offices at both Cleveragh Road, and Tubbercurry (since September 2003) provides a quality service to the customer.

The NVDF (National Vehicle Driver File) System allows the Sligo Office access information instantly on Vehicle and Driving Licences issued around the Country by its link with the V.R.U. (Vehicle Registration Unit) in Shannon, Co. Clare.

Our Visual Display Unit in the waiting area provides customers with detailed information on the various Motor Taxation & Driving Licences applications forms too ensure a prompt delivery of service.

The following Statistics shows that our business increased by 17% in 2003 compared to 2002.

Number of Transactions 2002-2003		
	2003	2002
Road Taxes	49,360	5,365
Roadworthiness Certs	2,482	11,528
Driving Licences	8,977	
Miscellaneous	5,751	11,528
Total	66,570	13,066
Total Receipts	€9,959,142	€8,649,308

From February 2004 it will be possible to renew your Motor Tax On-Line for most Vehicle categories by using the Department’s of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government website www.motortax.ie or www.motarchain.ie (as *gaeilge*). The Department’s On-Line service will be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and the V.R.U. (Vehicle Registration Unit) Shannon, Co. Clare will process applications and issue Motor Tax Discs

Sligo Fire Authority

The Fire Authority provides a number of services ranging from the emergency response to incidents such as fires, road traffic accidents, air accidents, chemical incidents and more recently biological incidents.

Another important function of the Fire Authority is to ensure the fire safety of the built environment through certification, inspection and enforcement. The Authority also provides information and training on fire safety management and fire fighting.



▲ Galway recruits training at Sligo Fire Station

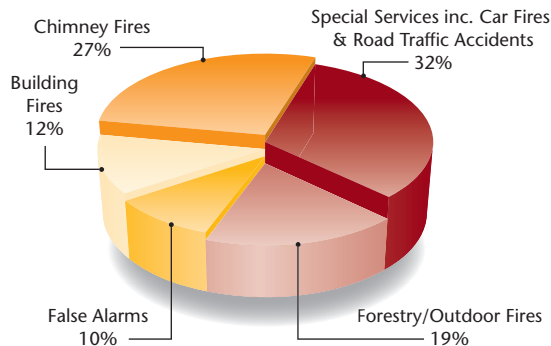
In order to provide this service in an efficient manner throughout the county there are Fire Brigade Stations in Sligo, Ballymote, Tubbercurry and Enniscrone. These Brigades attended over 760 incidents in the last year. This reflects the continued expansion of our commercial and residential building stock and the increase in traffic using our road network.

There were several large commercial fires this year, again emphasising the need for an efficient and effective fire service and the need for preventative measures. There has been an increase in car fires and fires caused by arsonists. These pose a serious threat to life and property and there can also be a substantial and economic cost arising from these incidents.

People must remain vigilant in the home, as this is where our most life threatening fires occur each year. The loss caused by these incidents is enormous, tragically three persons died as a result of such fires in 2003.

The fire authority attended numerous other “special services” incidents that resulted in four fatalities and emphasises the multi functionary role of the service provided.

Breakdown of Fire Brigade Attendances 2003



▲ Ladder drill at Sligo Fire Station

Sligo Fire Authority

TRAINING

There is a very strict training regime in the Fire Service necessitated by the difficult and dangerous environment in which Firefighters work. Firefighters undergo over one hundred hours training every year, this includes the latest advances in techniques used to tackle the fires known as "flashover" and "backdraft" and the latest methods of removing casualties safely from crashed vehicles. This is particularly important in view of the advances in active safety technology employed in the modern car; airbags and seatbelt tensioning do save lives when an accident occurs but can pose a serious threat to rescue personnel.



▲ Paul Ryan, Assistant Chief Fire Officer conducts Fire Awareness Training with staff from Nazareth House

The Brigade now holds "block" R.T.A. (Road Traffic Accidents) training over a number of days, in which the necessary skills are acquired and practised.

Sligo is now a "hot fire" training centre and offers this facility nationally for the training of Firefighters throughout the country. This facility is used to demonstrate and train Firefighters in the latest techniques and equipment necessary for their protection and the saving of life. The fire service now has 16 nationally qualified medical first responders among its staff.

The Breathing Apparatus training centre has been used as a national training centre following modernisation and the installation of a "gas fire system", this is used to train staff in proper search and rescue techniques and in the use of Breathing Apparatus in fire situations.

Local industries have also facilitated the Brigade in carrying out Pre-Fire Training in which various types of incidents are staged and training undertaken; should a similar incident occur the Brigade will have the necessary skills and resources needed to deal with it in an efficient and professional manner.

COMMUNITY FIRE SAFETY

Talks were given to the elderly and other groups on fire safety during 2003. Groups of primary school students visited the stations and watched fire safety videos and demonstrations, in all approximately 600 students visited the station.

Groups from secondary schools, Sligo Institute of Technology and the local community also participated in courses held in the Fire Station.

These courses reinforce the need for vigilance when it comes to fire safety and brings this message back to their homes, schools and workplaces.



▲ "Making Up" after an exercise

The Fire Authority processed over 170 Fire Safety Certificate applications as required under Building Control Legislation and dealt with in excess of 200 planning applications under the Planning Acts. These applications covered a wide range of premises from apartment blocks, hotels, and shops to large commercial developments.

Inspections were carried out under the various Licensing legislation covering nearly every type of premises from petroleum stores to dance licences. The Fire Authority made comment on all transfer of licences before the courts and carried out numerous during performance inspections of dance halls, public houses and workplaces to ensure the Fire Safety Standards were being upheld. Generally the level of co-operation received when advice is given is very good.



▲ Sligo Fire Service's new hydraulic platform

FIRE STATIONS AND APPLIANCES

In the last number of years, the ageing Fire Engines in Enniscrone, Tubbercurry, Ballymote and Sligo have been replaced with new models. The Emergency Tender in Sligo is in its 12th year of operational use with some of the equipment over 20 years old. It is intended to apply for funding from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government for the replacement of this appliance in the near future.

The Refurbishment and Remount of the Hydraulic Platform based at Sligo Fire Station Head Quarters was a welcome addition and will provide the community with the very best equipment available.

Plans were submitted to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government for the funding and upgrading of Sligo Fire Station in line with current requirements and this matter is being progressed, as is the provision of the new Fire Station in Ballymote.

COMMUNICATIONS

The 24-hour Watchroom at Headquarters deals with all emergency calls for the Borough and County. The proposed Computer Aided Mobilisation Project (CAMP) is expected to be available in the near future. The professionalism of the Watchroom Personnel who deal with all emergency calls received ensures that incidents are dealt with in an efficient manner.

Special Projects Office

CUSTOMER SERVICES

Providing a quality service and response to the customers we serve is at the centre of the current customer service programme that Sligo Local Authorities are implementing.

Actions taken recognise the need for attention to the timely delivery of services of a high quality, measured against performance indicators, personnel training and development in customer care, and more openness and transparency in decision making.

Sligo Local Authorities are conscious that each customer has different needs and that contact is made in a variety of ways. As a result initiatives are being developed and implemented to benefit customer groups in the areas such as consultation, communication, complaints, information / communications technology, partnership with staff and partnership with public representatives

Customer service actions include:

- ▶ Development of County Hall to make it more accessible and provide facilities for undertaking business in a confidential manner
- ▶ The development of a One Stop Shop in Tubbercurry which involves decentralising services out to rural communities
- ▶ The installation of touch screen information points at key public service areas. These points will provide access to planning files and will link into the e-direct system etc.
- ▶ The development of web sites for Sligo County Council and Sligo Borough Council
- ▶ Customer Service training for staff
- ▶ Induction training for staff
- ▶ Production of information leaflets and brochures
- ▶ Involving customers through consultation – for example local area plans
- ▶ The Council has recently supported the community forum by preparing a successful submission to ADM/CPA for a Policy Worker to assist the community and voluntary sector in preparing their policy position on local and national issues of concern.
- ▶ Letting people know how we performed using the National Service Indicators
- ▶ Involving customers in policy making through the strategic policy committees

In 2003 work commenced on the development of a Customer Services Desk. The Desk will become the first point of contact for customers. The development and implementation of the desk is being achieved through an interdepartmental team including representatives from the elected members.

When implementation is complete the officers on the desk will have a library of information. Regular briefing sessions will be held for the customer services officers and all staff to provide continuous updates on activities to ensure that the desk can respond to customer queries. The desk will also have access to the necessary infrastructure to provide a quick response including the use of a Customer Management System to record Customer contact and provide responses on frequently asked questions. Tracking of queries will also provide a useful tool in the management of customer contact and in-turn service provision.

Sligo Local Authorities have made significant improvements in relation to customer services, however it is an area that requires constant attention. Within the modernisation process Sligo County Council will continue to strive to deliver excellent customer services.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS

In 2003 the Special Projects Office prepared submissions to a number of agencies for funding towards local authority and community projects. The office was successful in obtaining Peace II, Interreg, national and EU funding for these projects.

Cross Border

Members of the Omagh Sligo Partnership continue to work to identify and collaborate on joint initiatives to benefit both Omagh and Sligo. Numerous projects are at different stages of development and involve the Partnership members directly or associated agencies. The Partnership continues to work towards delivering their Strategic Plan 2002 – 2006 and the following list outlines some of the broad range of projects worked on in 2002.

▼ Bordertrek 2003



Special Projects Office

PROJECT	PROGRESS MADE
Resource funding for Partnership including Programme Implementation	Current Project being prepared for submission to Co-operation Ireland to include Resource funding.
Theme 1 ~ Enterprise and Economic Development	
▶ Public Tendering Programme for small companies	▶ For re-submission to INTERREG
▶ Workspace / Enterprise Unit Development	▶ Number of Sligo Projects seeking partners. Search underway in Omagh for suitable partners
▶ 3rd level education network (Tech transfer programme)	▶ Currently underway with Phase 1 involving Omagh Sligo Fermanagh
▶ 3rd level networking	▶ Active engagement between Sligo and Omagh colleges
▶ Tourism	▶ Preparing joint tourism project which involves joint promotion and includes printing of dual map of Omagh and Sligo
▶ Micro Enterprises Programme	▶ Omagh and Sligo partners in this 12 Border county project to support SME's project facilitated by ICBAN
▶ North West Region Farmers market	▶ Involving Leader companies in Sligo, Donegal, Leitrim and Omagh, this project will bring together local producers to establish farmers markets
Theme 1 ~ Community Development	
▶ Sligo Connections	▶ Building the capacity of the community sector to initiate and sustain Cross Border community exchange programmes
▶ NUIG Diploma in Peace	▶ Supporting the ongoing development and implementation of this community focused Peace Diploma.
▶ Youth Sports West	▶ Both Councils participate in this Cross Border initiative which promotes sports development in schools in Omagh Sligo and Fermanagh
▶ Bordertrek	▶ Provide funding and assistance towards this annual Cross Border cycle involving over 1600 cyclists
▶ OSCEAN (Omagh Sligo Community Education Area Network)	▶ Will work to strengthen links by establishing a cross border network of community development education and training organisations in order to open educational access. Currently awaiting outcome of funding application to INTERREG.
▶ Community Exchange	▶ Ballygawley & Riverstown Dun Uladh Centre & Ballintogher (Youth & Music)
Projects being developed (in early stages)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Community Development Partnership involving Gortin ▶ Environmental Management Projects ▶ Broadband Initiative 	

Special Projects Office

SLIGO CONNECTIONS

Since its origin in 1999, Sligo Connections has helped towards removing barriers that may have existed for the development of cross border programmes. These barriers have been reduced through support provision and training amongst the communities.



▲ Sligo Connections Committee pictured with Cathaoirleach Cllr Joe Cawley and County Manager, Hubert Kearns at their Cross-Border Showcase in 2003

Through the facilitation of the Special Projects Office the Sligo Connections project was developed to encourage the exchange of information and experience on a cross border basis. From a strategic point of view the vision is to create innovation, energy and

commitment in developing cross border co-operation, develop people with the understanding, respect and appreciation of the different cultures and traditions of both parties, and assist in the elimination of fear, suspicion and uncertainty on both sides and the establishment of an ongoing programme of regular and deepening contacts.

Sligo Connections aims to raise awareness amongst the wider community about the opportunities arising from peace and of the potential for cross border exchanges and co-operation. Through funding received from ADM/CPA under the EU Peace 11 Programme the project has a dedicated development officer who oversees the development and delivery of the programmes. All enquiries on the Sligo Connections project to Conor Fitzgerald can be contacted at 071 91574745 or cfitzgerald@sligococo.ie

Project activity includes the delivery of training to community groups including Best Practice in Cross Border activity and a Trainer Skills Certificate. In 2003 the project also hosted its first Cross Border Community Showcase. The aim of the showcase was to highlight the achievement of the community and voluntary sector in Co. Sligo in relation to cross border projects and programmes. Over twenty groups participated in the event.



◀ Sligo Connections Quarterly Newsletter

Sligo Connections Cross-Border Community Showcase 2003 PHOTO GALLERY



Human Resources

Sligo County Council, with 463 staff at December 2003, is one of the largest employers in the North West Region.

The Council recognises the importance of its workforce, and the Human Resources Section endeavours to recruit qualified staff and provide appropriate incentives and a suitable work environment to retain these staff.

Benefits offered include flexible working hours, a contributory pension scheme, generous annual leave, work-sharing, training and development and promotional opportunities.

Sligo County Council's H.R. Section is responsible for recruitment both for the Council and for Sligo Borough Council. In 2003, 39 Interview Boards were set up to interview candidates to fill temporary and permanent vacancies in both local authorities. These independent interview boards were selected by the County Manager to recommend the most suitable candidates for employment or promotion in accordance with national regulations. 350 candidates were interviewed with 58 appointments being made in the course of the year.

During 2003 Sligo County Council continued its operation of a Work Placement Scheme for students in schools and colleges with 19 students being given the opportunity to work in various areas of the Sligo local authorities. This scheme is very beneficial to the students as they are obliged, as part of their course to gain some work experience in an office-working environment. In addition, 15 students pursuing engineering/planning qualifications availed of work experience programmes during the summer months.

The Human Resources Section also carries out the following functions:

- ▶ Industrial Relations
- ▶ Development and implementation of staff training
- ▶ Staff Welfare

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

During 2003 Sligo County Council continued to work with Unions and staff representatives to achieve good working relationships and to reconcile conflicting demands with the minimum of conflict. This was maintained by

- ▶ Processing/negotiation of Union Claims,
- ▶ Implementing nationally negotiated or local agreements on pay and conditions of employment,
- ▶ Preparing cases for the Labour Relations Commission, Labour Court, Rights Commissioners or other statutory appeal tribunal hearings

STAFF WELFARE

As worksharing in the Public Sector is now part of Government Policy in respect of work/life balance initiatives, it was decided to introduce such a scheme in the Local Authority Sector in January 2003. The scheme expanded the scope of the existing jobsharing scheme by providing for a wider range of attendance patterns. This scheme has proved very successful with 20 staff availing of it during the year.

A Term-time Leave Scheme was also introduced in January 2003. This scheme provides for unpaid leave for the purpose of allowing working parents or carers match their working arrangements to the main summer holidays of their children or to care for a family member who has a disability that gives rise to the need for care on a continuing or frequent basis. 3 staff availed of this scheme in 2003.

Sligo County Council Human Resources Section has developed and put in place a Dignity at Work Policy, which provides a procedure for addressing the issues of Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Bullying in the workplace.

An Equal Opportunities Policy is also in place which outlines the Council's commitment to treat and develop all its staff equally irrespective of sex, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, colour, race, nationality or membership of the travelling community.

The Human Resource Section in 2003 has continued to work with the Equality Action Team to deal with all equality issues in a fair and impartial manner.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

It is widely accepted that Training and Development are the keys to any successful organisation. Sligo Local Authorities recognise the importance of Training and Development and during the year a training plan was developed which focused on assisting staff to satisfy personal and organisational goals through their work.

During the course of the year a total of 3044 training days were delivered with particular emphasis placed on the training needs of the Outdoor staff. This was reflected in programmes such as:

Introduction to Computers (level 1 & level 2)

- ▶ 84 staff members from the Sligo Local Authorities completed the Level 1 programme in the early part of the year. 30 Staff completed an advanced programme in November/December of the year. In 2004 the full ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence) Programme by Distance Learning will be offered to these students.

Human Resources

Supervisory Skills Development

- ▶ 18 members of staff completed this 8-day FAS certified programme during the year.

Non National Roads Training Programme

- ▶ Staff attended courses on Signing, Lighting and Guarding at Roadworks, Winter Maintenance and Safepass Training

Retirement Planning

- ▶ A successful 2-day seminar was held to assist staff in planning for their retirement. Topics covered included Health, Diet and Exercise, Legal Matters and Personal taxation.

Waterworks Caretakers

- ▶ 10 staff completed this programme during the year, which gave an over-view of the sanitary services function.

Return to Learning

- ▶ The Return to Learning Project is a partnership initiative between the Local Authority National Partnership Advisory Group (LANPAG) and the Department of Education and Science (DES), supported by the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA). The project aims to give staff an opportunity to attend a workplace basic skills course. Participants benefit from the course by improvement of their literacy skills, increase in self-confidence and re-awakening of an interest in learning.

During 2003, twenty staff participated in the programme. Sligo County Council will continue to promote this initiative in 2004

In addition to the above training courses, funding was provided for a Scheme to support 4 No. General Operatives in obtaining the **Category C Truck Licence**.

As part of the Council's initiative to enhance Customer Services, the following training courses were held during the year:-

- ▶ 1 Day Customer Services Training for Newly Appointed Staff
- ▶ Effective Writing Skills
- ▶ Team-working for a Quality Customer Service (in Environment Section & Planning Section)

An emphasis was also placed on Health and Safety Training with 27 staff participating in a 1 day Introductory Course in First-Aid and a further 17 taking part in the 3 day Certified Course.



▲ Presentation of Occupational First Aid Certificates to staff by Cathaoirleach Cllr Joe Cawley

Excellence Through People is Ireland's national standard for human resource development. Co-ordinated through FAS (Foras Aiseanna Saothair) it has been welcomed and supported by employers, their staff, trade unions and government.

Excellence through people is awarded to organisations in recognition of achieving and maintaining the operation of a human resource system, which strives to achieve excellence through the training, development and involvement of its most important resource, its staff.

The two main objectives of the standard are:

- ▶ To encourage the development of employees to full potential so as to maximise their contribution to the specific needs of the organisation.
- ▶ To show recognition for organisations that have achieved this aim.

All types of organisations are eligible for Excellence Through People accreditation including manufacturing and service organisations, the voluntary sector and the public sector.



▲ Staff who completed their certificates in Local Government Studies in 2003

Up to December 2003 approximately 320 organisations in Ireland employing in excess of 75,000 people were accredited with Excellence Through People.

The standard has already been achieved by a number of local authorities, i.e. Clare, Mayo, Donegal, Waterford City Council and the Mechanical Division of Dublin City Council.

Human Resources

The Local Government Management Services Board has indicated that this standard gives a thorough "how to" when it comes to design and implementation of organisational training and development within Human Resources.

It is also worth noting that the standard for 'Excellence Through People' has been included in the LANPAG Action Plan for 'Sustaining Progress', to be achieved by all local authorities by the end of 2004.

Feedback from organisations with Excellence Through People suggests that there are many benefits in both the process of applications for ETP and in having the ETP standard. From FÁS research some of these include:

- ▶ Independent recognition of Best-Practice Human Resource standards.
- ▶ Marketing – allows organisations differentiate on people skills.
- ▶ Demonstrates a public commitment to learning and better standards.
- ▶ Increased ability to attract and retain high calibre staff.
- ▶ Improved organisational performance.
- ▶ Provides a focus and a structure for HRD.
- ▶ Benchmarking the HR function.
- ▶ Increased contribution to bottom-line.

Applications for Excellence Through People are considered against the following criteria:

Section One (150 points)	Review of Organisation Plans and Objectives
Section Two (250 points)	Preparation of Organisation Training Plan
Section Three (120 points)	Review of Training
Section Four (240 points)	Implementation of Training
Section Five (40 points)	Training and Development Records
Section Six (200 points)	Employee Communication and Involvement

In order to achieve ETP Certification, organisations must score a minimum 80% in each section and a minimum 80% overall. Certification is given for a period of one year during which time organisations are entitled to use the ETP logo for marketing or recruitment purposes.

In 2003 it was decided that The Directorate of Housing, Social, Cultural and Corporate Services would be a pilot for the rest of the Council and for Sligo Borough Council for Excellence Through People. The application was lodged on the 9th September 2003 and the award was presented at a function in the Great Northern Hotel, Bundoran, Co Donegal on the 31st October 2003.

The Management Team in line with the commitments entered into under 'Sustaining Progress' has decided to roll out the standard to staff in other Directorates and Sligo Borough Council on a phased basis. Link people have been nominated from Departments and a one-day training/awareness session will be provided for these staff members. In addition, information sessions for all staff will be facilitated by the Training and Development Officer over the coming months. As part of the process, a Training Needs Analysis will be conducted by Section Heads in each Directorate.



▲ Presentation of the Local Government Studies Higher Certificate to Ciaran Commons and Bernadette Devine

During the process of achieving Excellence Through People in the pilot Directorate it was found that it:

- ▶ Provides support for one to one discussions with line managers and staff.
- ▶ Offers a feedback system which provides a focus on development needs.
- ▶ Ensures an annual sign off on Training & Development to be supported with regular review.
- ▶ Facilitates the linking of Training & Development to achieving goals set out in Operational & Corporate Plans.
- ▶ Ensures that a strong emphasis is placed on Health & Safety.
- ▶ Ensures that the validation of Training & Development is regularly undertaken.
- ▶ Provides for regular Training Evaluation.
- ▶ Necessitates the systematic recording of Training & Development.
- ▶ Emphasises Employee involvement and communication.
- ▶ Allows the development of employee feedback mechanisms.
- ▶ Promotes team culture.
- ▶ Ensures structures and discipline for staff meetings, i.e. agenda and minutes.
- ▶ Encourages formal reviews of operational plans.
- ▶ Provides the benefit of receiving Quality Accreditation in recognition for good HR Practices.

Any queries regarding Excellence Through People should be directed to Joe Gethin, Training and Development Officer, email: jgethin@sligococo.ie or at (071) 9157484.

Human Resources

The Stranorlar Regional Training Centre

The establishment of the Regional Training Centre marks another step in the provision of a National Network of Training Centres to serve the training needs for staff working in both Sanitary Services and Roads Section of the Local Authority. The need was highlighted in 1993 and as a result the Water Services National Training Group was set up to examine the Training needs and to make recommendations on how to address these needs. Members of the group consist of representatives from Department of the Environment and Local Government, Local Authorities, FAS, the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Federation of Group Water Schemes.

Stranorlar Regional Training Centre began operation in November 1999. Since that time the Centre has proved to be an important resource for the Local Authorities of Cavan, Donegal, Monaghan and Sligo (County Council and Borough Council).

While initially the Centre was intended to cater for staff working in the area of Sanitary Services, there quickly developed a realisation of the need for training in other areas. The Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government established a Roads Training Programme, funded through Non National Roads and delivered through the Regional Training Centres. This complements the Water Services Training Programme which runs in parallel.

As the demands made on the Centre increased, so too have the services provided.

During 2003 the Training Centre delivered training to 210 staff in Sligo Local Authorities resulting in 474 training days. 90% of the training delivered was on an outreach basis in venues throughout the county. All courses have a practical element allowing each delegate to put theory into practice through practical exercise and assessments.

Looking forward to 2004 it is proposed to recruit a full-time Trainer. The creation of this post is recognition of the important work being done in and by the Regional Training Centres. At present two members Sligo County Council's engineering staff, John Owens and Val Baynes, deliver training on a part-time basis for the centre.

An extension to the Centre is currently under construction with a completion date of the end of August 2004. These improved facilities will allow for a greater range of Technical courses to be delivered and will mark a substantial improvement in training delivery.

Non-National Roads Training Programme

The 2003 Non-National Road Grant Allocations provided for expenditure of €5.2m on the Non-National Roads Training Programme- €3.75m to upgrade the existing Regional Water Services Training Centres so as to enable them to also provide non-national roads training and €1.455m to be allocated to individual local authorities as dedicated Training grants.

Sligo County Council received an allocation of €30,000 with Sligo Borough Council receiving €20,000

There are twenty three separate modules in the Non-National Roads training programme. To attain FETAC (Further Education Training Awards Council) Certificate, participants must complete

(a) 4 Core Modules:

- (1) Health and Safety Foundation Training (Safe Pass);
- (2) Signing and lighting and guarding at Roadworks;

plus any two from the following 5 modules

- ▶ Trench Re-instatement and pothole repairs
- ▶ Location of underground services
- ▶ Road Strengthening
- ▶ Surface dressing
- ▶ Traffic calming

and

(b) 5 other modules from the Non-National Roads Training Programme

Non-National Roads Training Programme – Modules

1	Abrasive Wheel Operation
2	Safe Operation of Small Dumpers/Equipment
3	Kerbs and Paving-Laying and Maintenance
4	Driver Training
5	Installation of Street Ironwork
6	Chainsaw Operation
7	First Aid
8	Concreting and Fencing
9	Highway Horticulture
10	General Services Supervisory Development
11	Basic Setting Out

The Modules available in 2003 are Safe Pass (Health and Safety), Signing, Guarding and Lighting at Road Works, Trench Restoration & Pothole Repair, Winter Maintenance, Surface Dressing, and Supervisory Skills.

County Sligo Heritage Office

The aim of the County Sligo Heritage Office is:-

'To secure benefits for the heritage of County Sligo and to increase awareness, appreciation and enjoyment of it for all'

The Heritage Office is committed to providing high quality advice on all matters relating to heritage issues and is responsible for developing policies and priorities for the identification, protection, preservation and enhancement of Sligo's heritage. It also seeks to assist the development of the Local Authorities heritage strategy and policy, advising on heritage impacts and consequences. Central to the services provided by the Heritage Office is the promotion of interest, education, knowledge and pride in the heritage of county Sligo, and in so doing, increasing awareness, appreciation and enjoyment of the county's heritage.

The development of a co-ordinated heritage strategy at county level is a key recommendation of government policy as outlined in the National Heritage Plan (2002) and the National Biodiversity Plan (2002).

This is being achieved through:

- ◆ Establishment of the County Sligo Heritage Forum
- ◆ Co-ordination and implementation of the County Sligo Heritage Plan 2002-2006 which focuses on:

1. Collection of heritage data

To advise on, and contribute to, the development of a comprehensive heritage database for Sligo, and to ensure the effective use of heritage data in policy formulation and decision-making

2. Local Authority heritage management

To propose high quality advice to Sligo local authorities on policies and priorities relating to Sligo's heritage and to support them in the integration of heritage conservation into their activities



▲ Sea Sandwort

3. Raising heritage awareness

To facilitate awareness, understanding and enjoyment of Sligo's heritage among the community

4. Promoting best practice

To promote, and advise on, best practice standards for heritage conservation and management

The County Sligo Heritage Plan has commenced a new and exciting period for heritage conservation in Sligo, based on partnership and co-ordination amongst all those with an interest in and remit for heritage management in the county. The Heritage Plan which was launched in 2002, is now entering its third year of implementation. As one of the first of its kind in Ireland, it is a concerted effort to establish objectives and set priorities for our shared heritage. The emphasis is on shared responsibility for the protection and conservation of Sligo's heritage resource. Copies of the County Sligo Heritage Plan 2002-2006 are available from the County Sligo Heritage Office or can be downloaded from the council's website – www.sligococo.ie

▼ Beach at Mullaghmore



County Sligo Heritage Office

COLLECTION OF HERITAGE DATA

– *Achievements in 2003*

- ◆ Audit of geological sites in County Sligo in partnership with the Geological Survey of Ireland
- ◆ Audit of Archaeological objects held in museum collections in partnership with the National Museum of Ireland
- ◆ Thatch Survey of county Sligo
- ◆ Collation of scientific papers relating to the geology, flora and fauna of County Sligo.
- ◆ Completion of a biodiversity audit of County Sligo

HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

– *Achievements in 2003*

A key role for the Heritage Office is the provision of high quality advice to the Sligo Local Authorities on policies and priorities relating to heritage and to support them in the integration of heritage conservation into their activities. This is achieved through heritage appraisal of development plans and local area plans, and the development of heritage training and structured input of heritage advice.



▲ Launch of the Sligo Seashore CD and website, won first prize at the European eSchola e-Learning Awards in 2003

RAISING AWARENESS

– *Achievements in 2003*

- ◆ Continued to advise on the development of a County Museum for Sligo
- ◆ Facilitation of the Schools heritage and IT programme through the launch of the Sligo Seashore CD and website (www.sligoseashore.com), which won first prize at the European eSchola e-Learning Awards in 2003.
- ◆ Development of a Field Monument Pilot in North Sligo
- ◆ Hosted a 2 day Community Heritage Seminar
- ◆ Publication of Heritage Matters (4 issues)
- ◆ Hosted heritage exhibitions (2)
- ◆ Promotion of the Heritage in Schools Scheme

PROMOTING BEST PRACTICE

– *Achievements in 2003*

- ◆ Ongoing provision of advice to communities/individuals developing heritage initiatives and facilities
- ◆ Caring for Collections Course held for community museums/heritage initiatives in Co. Sligo.

PHYSICAL HERITAGE PROJECTS

– *Achievements in 2003*

- ◆ Sligo Cemetery Gate Lodge conservation grant allocation of €40,000 secured from the Urban & Village Renewal Regional Operational Programme 2000-2006 to carry out conservation works during 2004.

The County Sligo heritage programme is funded primarily by the Sligo Local Authorities and The Heritage Council. In each programme area, partnerships have been developed and additional funding accessed from relevant sources

Conferences and Seminars

Conferences and Seminars Attended by Councillors in 2003

Merriman Winter School, Clare

31st January – 2nd February 2003

Omagh University Partnership Launch, Omagh
19th February, 2003

North Tipperary County Councils Conference, Tipperary

20th – 21st February 2003

Carlow Tourism Conference, Carlow

27th – 28th February, 2003

Colmcille Heritage Trust Conference, Donegal

28th February – 2nd March 2003

Transport in Ireland Conference, Tipperary

7th – 8th March, 2003

Ass. Of Health Boards in Ireland

21st – 22nd March, 2003

Kilkenny County Council

Conference, Kilkenny

21st – 22nd March, 2003

Duhallow Conference, Cork

27th – 30th March, 2003

Placenames Conference, Clare

11th – 13th April, 2003

International Peace Conference, Donegal

15th – 17th April, 2003

LAMA Annual Conference,

Donegal

24th – 25th April, 2003

Survey Ireland 2003 Conference, Dublin

25th – 27th April, 2003

Monastic, Cathedral & Ecclesiastic Libraries, Tipperary

25th – 27th April, 2003

Sherkin Island Conference, Ireland

9th – 10th May, 2003

Michael Corcoran

Tribute Conference, Sligo

9th – 10th May, 2003

Reviewing Public Support for enterprise and job creation, Cork

16th – 17th May, 2003

Federation of Local History Societies, Spring Seminar, Meath

16th – 17th May, 2003

Survey Ireland 2003

Conference, Dublin

20th May, 2003

AGM, Irish Public Bodies, Dublin

22nd May, 2003

Women in Politics, Cork

23rd May, 2003

IPA Councillor Training, Galway

23rd May, 2003

Rattoo Heritage Society Environmental Conference, Kerry

29th – 31st May, 2003

General Council of County Council, Annual Conference, Cork

30th – 31st May, 2003

Chamber of Commerce of Ireland Conference, Galway

6th – 7th June, 2003

Robert Emmett Summer School, Tipperary

6th – 8th June, 2003

Mid West Regional Authority Conference, Tipperary

13th June, 2003

The Parnell Summer School, Wexford

27th – 29th June, 2003

Byrne Perry Summer School, Wexford

27th – 29th June, 2003

International Humbert School, Mayo

1st – 6th July, 2003

Fine Gael Local Government Conference, Cork

15th – 16th August, 2003

Merriman Summer School, Clare

17th August – 24th August, 2003

Border Regional Authority Regional Planning Guidelines Conference, Cavan

4th September, 2003

National Spatial Strategy 4th – 5th September, 2003

AMAI Annual Conference, Wexford

11th – 13th September, 2003

Sheridan Island Marine Conference, Cork

18th – 19th September, 2003

Strengthening Democracy Conference, Cork

18th – 20th September, 2003

Information Technology



▲ New I.T. facility at Tubbercurry Community Library

2003 saw a continuation of the substantial developments of recent years in the provision of I.T. services. Facilities were installed in the One Stop Shop in Tubbercurry to support a new Motor tax office, a new modern Library with public access PC's, a new area office and a number of other offices which were re-located from County Hall.

A new Library Management System has been available since January 2003 which gives the public online access to Library catalogues. This system provides the facility for a user to check if a particular book is available and to reserve it online.

I.T. facilities have been put in place in the new Environment offices which were opened in Cleveragh enabling access to all systems that are available in County Hall.

Sligo Borough Council web site was launched to give public online access to information on all services provided by the Borough. This will provide the basis for future developments enabling the provision of online services.

Intranet rollout and training of staff has been completed and usage is increasing throughout the organisation.

Substantial progress has been made in Geographical Information System in 2003. All planning applications received since 01/ 2003 are digitally recorded onto the Digital Planning Register. The historical database has also been converted into a digital version and is widely available. Other databases are being added as they become available: ie Roads, water/sewage networks.

A PC is available at the public counter for public viewing of planning applications, both current and historical.



◀ Sligo Borough Council's home page:- www.sligoborough.ie



Cathairleach's Year Photo Diary



▲ Journalist Sean Kilfeather signing visitors book at a reception held in his honour by the Cathairleach



▲ Mayor Cllr Sean MacManus and Cathairleach at a quilt presentation organised with the local national schools. The quilt is now on display at Tubbercurry Library



◀ Unveiling of plaque at Tubbercurry One Stop Shop by Cathairleach Joe Cawley



▲ Cathairleach Joe Cawley making presentation to Curry Football Team Manager Dennis Kearney



▲ Cathairleach at reception held for O'Connor School of Dancing



◀ Children from Belarus receiving Westlife tickets at County Hall

Cathaoirleach's Year Photo Diary



▲ Reception held by Cathaoirleach for St. Joseph's Boxing Club



▲ Cathaoirleach Joe Cawley with Kevin Malee, Chairman of Sligo Association of Chicago



◀ Erika Dolan receiving certificate from Cathaoirleach at a reception held in honour of the O'Connor School of Dancing.

▶ Michael Breslin, Manager of Sligo IT receiving certificate from Cathaoirleach



◀ Emer Shannon receiving certificate from Cathaoirleach at a reception held in honour of the O'Connor School of Dancing.



▲ Minister Seamus Brennan, Cathaoirleach and Mayor Alderman Sean MacManus at the signing of the main contract for the Sligo Inner Relief Road



▲ Reception held by Cathaoirleach in honour of the Sligo Lions Club



▲ Cathaoirleach with Sigerson Cup winners Sligo Institute of Technology

Sligo County Council Staff

Sligo County Council extends its appreciation to the following staff who retired/resigned from the service in 2003

Michael Shanley, *Station Officer*

John J McDonagh, *Craftworker*

John Feeney, *Driver*

Liam Henderson, *Craftworker*

Marco Feeney, *General Operative*

Tommy Killoran, *Fireman*

Martin O Connor, *Ganger*

Trevor Hennessy, *Mechanic*

Stephen Garvey, *Assistant Engineer*



▲ Sligo County Council Staff working on the reconstruction of Templehouse Bridge

Sligo County Council also remembers Staff who passed away during 2003

Liam McDonagh

Cormac Heneghan

John Scanlon

Thomas C Quinn

Liam O'Donnell

Peter Curley

Mathew Brennan

Thomas Farry

Richard Kennedy

Daniel Warnock (died in service)

Rose Feeney

Kathleen Kennedy

Michael McDonagh



▲ Sligo County Council Management Team:

Front L-R: **Tim Caffrey**, *Director of Services, Housing, Social, Cultural and Corporate Services*; **Hubert Kearns**, *County Manager*; **Dorothy Clarke**, *Director of Services, Community & Enterprise*

Back L-R: **Seamus Concannon**, *Director of Services, Infrastructural Services*; **Thomas Kilfeather**, *Head of Finance*; **Pat Forkan**, *Director of Services, Planning, Environment and Emergency Services*

Sligo County Council welcomes the following staff who joined during 2003

Ann Melia, *Branch Librarian*

Susan Reilly, *Library Assistant*

Malachy Gillen, *Library Assistant*

Financial Statement 2003 (Estimated*)

* These are estimated figures (as at date of publication) and subject to change at the time of publication of the 2003 Annual Financial Statement (AFS).

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Total expenditure on capital and revenue services in 2003 amounted to €81.9m (2002 €90.4m). Of this €43.7m (2002 €42.8m) was spent on revenue services and €38.2m (2002 €47.6m) was spent on capital services. Both figures indicate a very high level of activity during the year and the €38.2m spent on capital services is an indication of the Council's ongoing commitment to position Sligo and the North West region to have a good quality of physical, social and recreational infrastructure and a satisfactory range of ancillary services which both modern businesses and individuals require.

PROMPT PAYMENTS ACT

The council's policy is to process payments in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Government Publication "*Better Local Government – A Programme for Change*" was published in December 1996. Section 5 of the publication, which dealt with Finance, set out as one of its main objectives "The development of a Financial Management System (FMS)". The Financial Management system is called "Agresso". Significant progress has been made to date in this area as follows:

- ▶ Introduction of on-line purchase to pay module (April 2001).
- ▶ Introduction of Revenue collection system (Nov 2001).
- ▶ Introduction of Billing systems covering rents, rates, loans (May 2003).

All of the above projects were successfully implemented in Sligo County Council on the dates agreed with the Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government and the Local Government Computer Services Board.

An integral part of the FMS is asset valuation and balance sheets. The current objective is to have full balance sheet accounting as part of the Annual Financial Statement (AFS) for 2003. In order to achieve this the Historical Assets of Sligo County Council have been identified, quantified and valued.

The benefits of the move to balance sheet accounting will be to bring Irish local authority accounting into line with other European countries. It should also be noted that there is now a requirement to establish a National Public Property Register, which will contain details of all properties in the ownership of Government Departments and other public bodies including local authorities. Commencing in 2003 the Annual Financial Statement (AFS) of county, city and town councils will include a balance sheet that will show all of the assets and liabilities of a local authority.

The previous financial system used by local authorities (prior to the new FMS) was perceived to be deficient in the following areas:

- ▶ It did not promote accountability in the use of assets
- ▶ Lack of control over certain assets and the non maintenance of certain asset registers
- ▶ All of the assets and liabilities of a local authority were not reflected in the AFS
- ▶ Lack of information on the level of assets employed in delivering services
- ▶ Did not reveal or quantify the level of potential liabilities (e.g. unfunded capital balances).

The anticipated benefits arising from balance sheet accounting are as follows:

- ▶ Provide a more transparent picture of all the assets and liabilities of a local authority.
- ▶ Provide greater control over the location and identity of assets
- ▶ Help to quantify the true costs of delivering services and the amount of capital employed
- ▶ Identify a link between ongoing costs to be met by a corresponding stream of income (i.e. housing loans)
- ▶ Having quantified the value of assets will help in the negotiation of a higher level of maintenance budget to maintain the asset in good working order
- ▶ Help to develop replacement policies and future cash flow requirements
- ▶ Promote a more efficient use of assets and assist in improving financial decisions re: making and setting of fees, Investment of surplus cash and disposal of surplus assets.

Therefore the 2003 AFS for Sligo County Council will be a document significantly more comparable to the Accounts of a private sector company in that they will contain an Income/expenditure account (similar to a Profit & Loss account) and a Balance Sheet with comprehensive notes supporting the financial information in both documents.

Financial Statement

	Revenue Account		Capital Account		Totals	
	2003 (€)	2002 (€)	2003 (€)	2002 (€)	2003 (€)	2002 (€)
Expenditure	43,748	42,798	38,195	47,648	81,943	90,446
Receipts	43,818	42,726	39,683	44,577	83,501	87,303
Surplus (Deficit)	70	-72	1,488	-3,071	1,558	-3,143
Opening Balance	-2,059	-1,987	-4,138	-1,067	-6,197	-3,054
Closing Balance	-1,989	-2,059	-2,650	-4,138	-4,639	-6,197

Revenue Account – Adopted Estimates	Programme Groups €	Expenditure %	Adopted Estimate €
1. Housing and Building	2,817	6	2,635
2. Road Transportation & Safety	19,074	44	17,134
3. Water & Sewerage	4,359	10	4,351
4. Developmental Incentives & Control	2,645	6	2,671
5. Environmental Protection	4,686	11	6,600
6. Recreation & Amenity	2,596	6	2,624
7. Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare	3,435	8	2,989
8. Miscellaneous	4,136	9	2,500
Total	43,748	100	41,504

Sources of Funds – Revenue Account	2003 €	2003 %	2002 €	2002 %
Local Government Fund	11,131	26	11,204	26
Other State Grants	18,931	43	17,047	40
Goods / Services	8,827	20	10,528	25
Rates	2,829	6	2,468	6
Urban Charge	2,100	5	1,479	3
Total	43,818	100	42,726	100

Sources of Funds – Capital Account	2003 €	2003 %	2002 €	2002 %
Local Government Fund				
Other State Grants	28,825	73	26,446	59
Goods / Services				
Rates				
Urban Charge				
Borrowing	4,471	12	11,046	25
Transfer from Revenue	546	1	663	2
Redemp. Housing Loans	900	2	1,940	4
Other Receipts	4,941	12	4,482	5
Total	39,683	100	44,577	100

Sources of Funds – Total	2003 €	2003 %	2002 €	2002 %
Local Government Fund	11,131	13	11,204	13
Other State Grants	47,756	57	43,493	50
Goods / Services	8,827	11	10,528	12
Rates	2,829	3	2,468	3
Urban Charge	2,100	2	1,479	2
Borrowing	4,471	5	11,046	13
Transfer from Revenue	546	1	663	0
Redemp. Housing Loans	900	2	1,940	2
Other Receipts	4,941	6	4,482	5
Total	83,501	100	87,303	100

Performance Indicators

PROGRAMME GROUP ONE – HOUSING AND BUILDING

Housing	2002	2003
Number on Housing List	735	700
Number of housing applicants housed	88 (Representing 254 people: 120 Adults 134 Children)	87
Number of houses purchased	14	8
Number of houses built	39	3
Number of houses commenced	21	9
Number of new residents associations assisted	7	3

PROGRAMME GROUP TWO – ROAD TRANSPORTATION AND SAFETY

Roads	2002	2003
Length of National Primary roads in County Sligo	102.7km	102.3km
Length of National Secondary roads in County Sligo	47.4km	47.4km
Length of Regional roads in County Sligo	214.2km	214.2km
Length of local roads in County Sligo	2279.5km	2280km
% of local roads surface dressed per annum	3.2% representing 72.6km	2.70%
% of regional roads surface dressed per annum	7.5% representing 16.1 kms	5.60%
Cost/m ² of strengthening on National roads		12.66m ²
Cost/m ² of surfacing dressing on national roads	€4.30	€4.59
Number of non public roads and other projects completed under the Local improvement scheme	44	34
Length of improved roadway on National Primary overlays	0.4km strengthened 4.0km surface dressed	4.69km
Non National Roads	2002	2003
Discretionary Improvement Grants	19 completed	38
Restoration Programme	2002	2003
Regional Road surface dressing cost/m ²	€3.70	€4.05
Regional Road Improvement (S.R) cost/m ²	€9.29	€10.96
Local Road Surface Dressing cost/m ²	€4.36	€4.76
Local Improvement (S.R.) cost/m ²	€4.90	€5.80
Motor Taxation	2002	2003
Number of transactions	65,448	66,570
Number of car tax disc transactions	46,883	49,360
Number of Driving licence transactions	10,143	8,977
Number of Roadworthiness Certs & Misc		8,233
Number of postal applications submitted	19,634	19,971
Amount of income generated	€8,649,308	€9,959,142

PROGRAMME GROUP THREE – WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE

	2002	2003
Amount of water produced in 2002	9,647,907 m ³ (9.647,907 x 109 litres or 2.122243 x 109 gallons)	13,715,167 m ³

PROGRAMME GROUP FOUR – DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES AND CONTROL

Planning	2002	2003
Total number of applications received	991	1108
Total number of applications determined	973	972
Decisions to grant	773	858
Decisions to refuse	200	114
Number of local area plans progressed to public display	2	2

Performance Indicators

Enforcement – Planning Enforcement	2002	2003
Number of Complaints	163	178
Time taken to respond to complaints	4 weeks	
Number of warning letters issued	125	128
Enforcement – Building Control	2002	2003
Number of Commencement notices received	436	555
Number of Commencement notices rejected as invalid	24	42
% inspection rate achieved	12%	13.50%
% compliance	98%	13.50%
Number of warning letters sent	27	128
Enforcement – Dangerous Structures	2002	2003
Number of dangerous structures identified	2	1
Number of buildings made safe	2	1
Tidy Towns	2002	2003
Number of villages participating	14	14
% increase in Competition results	2.50%	3.40%
Heritage	2002	2003
Number of village design statements completed	4	0

PROGRAMME GROUP FIVE – ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Fire Service	2002	2003
Number of incidents attended	765	767
Number of fire safety certificates issued	114	144
Number of licencing inspections carried out	150	92

PROGRAMME GROUP SIX – RECREATION AND AMENITY

Arts	2002	2003
Number of arts programmes delivered	19	12
Per capita spend on Arts Programme	€10.15	€2.05
Number of arts grants allocated	28 (total value - €173,000)	37
Number of arts publications developed	11	11
Library Service	2002	2003
Number of reading initiatives developed	15	6
Cost of books issued	€5.75	€7.15

OTHER KEY MEASURES:

Corporate Services	2002	2003
Complaints to office of the Ombudsman	11	4
Number of cross border programmes delivered	4	5
No. of County Council Meetings 2002	16 (including adjournments)	27
No. of Strategic Policy Committee meetings 2002		
SPC 1 Economic Development and Planning Policy	5	4
SPC 2 Environmental Policy	4	4
SPC 3 Transportation and Infrastructure Policy	4	4
SPC 4 Housing policy/Social and cultural Development	5	4
Number of Press Releases	156	132
Number of responses to Press Queries	208	324
Number of Publications	3	5
% of people employed with disabilities	3.10%	3.54%
Number of training days per employee	3.6 days	5.60%
Number of days lost through industrial relations disputes	Nil	1 day X 24 personnel (unofficial) 7 days X 24 personnel (official)



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