

BWRA NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALLINACURRA WESTON RESIDENTS' ALLIANCE

REGENERATION TO BE 'REGENERATED'

- But will it stop the land grab?

In September the Minister for Environment, Phil Hogan TD, announced that the Limerick Regeneration Programme will be run by an integrated local authority for Limerick City and County. But will this new Council do any better? Will it stop the land grab?

Presently, the Limerick Regeneration Programme is being done by Limerick City Council (LCC) and the Limerick Regeneration Agencies (LRA).

The Agencies were set up by Ministerial Orders four-and-a-half years ago in June 2007 and the Orders are due to lapse on 14th June next year, with very little progress indeed.

Former Assistant Dublin City Manager, Brendan Kenny, was appointed CEO of the Agencies, and John Fitzgerald, former Dublin City Manager and author of the report that recommended regeneration, was appointed Chairperson of both Boards.

For our community, a lot rested on the *Fitzgerald Report's* promise to tackle family, social and educational problems, but first and foremost the anti-social behaviour of a minority would be challenged in order to "restore confidence and stability in the communities" and allow "other interventions an opportunity to work". All this, and the provision of new housing, would be completed over five years.

The *Fitzgerald Report* promised an "exclusively dedicated" and a "highly visible Garda presence at all times" but this never materialised.

To date, in the four regeneration areas, nearly 1,000 families have been displaced, over 700 homes have been demolished and there are now more boarded-up houses than ever before. Such houses are almost systematically looted, vandalised, and often burnt-out.



Limerick Regeneration – Everything is "Excellent"

The decision to demolish nearly 3,000 homes was made without any real consultation or debate. Who benefits?

Penetrating damp, leaking water mains, illegal dumping, junkies and rats become the new neighbours. Having long since finished paying a mortgage, the residents next door are often elderly, vulnerable and afraid. With intimidation by proxy, depopulation is the order of the day.

Homeowners, who make up the majority of residents, have three choices: they can wait for their new house to be built, they can sell their homes to the Council for the 'market rate' (€30,000 - €50,000), or they can give up their home in exchange for €35,000 'compensation' and rented accommodation elsewhere in the city. Our councillors, none of whom lives in a regeneration area, have become glorified auctioneers.

Depopulation and teacher-loss is affecting the local schools: 272 pupils enrolled at Corpus Christi National School in Moyross in 2007, but this year only 175 have enrolled. Most of the 61 pupils attending Southill Junior School are bussed in from other parts of the city.

As for the physical end of things, the 'Master Plans', produced by the Agencies in 2008 at a cost of €2,086,744, were shelved and a revised programme was approved by the previous government in June 2010, pledging €337 million over four years. However, most of this money is for new roads and displacing people.

Construction is currently underway on 33 units in Moyross (20 sheltered apartments and 13 houses). The Agencies had originally applied to build 40 units, but they were found to be sub-standard in size. Indeed, the residents of the surrounding Moyross estates had objected as construction would remove the green play area for their children and block their view of the Clare Hills. They were also fearful of who their new neighbours might be. A further 20 sheltered apartments have been approved for Southill with 70 more announced for Edward St. Again these developments are actually on previously-undeveloped sites with the latter outside the legal remit of the Agencies.

While the Agencies had promised that local employment would be a part of any new development, provision for on-site training and the employment of locals was not stipulated in the contract signed with Clancy Construction. This betrays standards lower than applied in Dublin regeneration in areas like Docklands, HARP and Fatima Mansions.

If we take the view that regeneration is what regeneration does, then the only part of the Fitzgerald Report that got any attention was to *"unlock the value of lands, all of which are within short distance of the city centre"*, an economy-dependent developer-oriented approach which does little to tackle the serious and on-going social problems endured by our community.

The Agencies claim to have consulted and engaged with us, yet the majority of residents feel uninformed and unrepresented. Instead of empowerment, residents got dispossessed and displaced.



Community & Voluntary Fair 2011

The BWRA took part in this year's Community & Voluntary Fair, which was well attended. Once again it proved to be an opportunity to make new contacts. There was a free bar-b-que and various acts provided entertainment on the day, in particular the display of Irish dancing by the O'Rourke School of Dancing was exceptional.

Above: Matt Collins mans the BWRA stand at the Fair.

Residents haven't taken this state-sponsored land grab and anti-community behaviour lying down, and the Ballinacurra Weston Residents' Alliance are calling for a real role in the decision-making process and are linking in with Dublin communities through *Tenants First* and the *Community Action Network* to develop a human-rights based approach to regeneration.

It is the stated intention of the Government that the regeneration programme will be run by an integrated local authority for Limerick City and County. Notwithstanding the questionable way the Agencies were staffed to begin with, a change of personnel will do little to improve matters unless there is the involvement of residents in a real and meaningful way and an end to the mindless developers' agenda.



Matt Collins, Chairperson of the BWRA, chats to Cllr. Maria Byrne about regeneration and the lack of real Community participation. It's important that we lobby our councillors now, so that we don't have to endure more of the same land-grabbing antics under when regeneration is under new management. Community participation is the way forward.

BWRA WIN LIMERICK COMMUNITY CHALLENGE

The Ballinacurra Weston Residents' Alliance (BWRA) was delighted with the news that we were declared overall winner of the Limerick Community Challenge.

As the recipient of an Environmental grant of €1,000 from Limerick City Council the BWRA was invited to take part in the challenge to demonstrate the particular improvement that was made as a result of community effort in 2011.

With additional funding from the Parish Matching Grant Scheme the BWRA was able to purchase the equipment and materials necessary to establish a memory garden, which was the brainchild of resident Michelle Kirby.

Residents came out in force over a number of rain free days in August and worked together to turn a derelict site into a beautiful garden. *"A great effort was made by all, particularly the children of Ballinacurra Weston"* said Matt Collins, chairperson of the BWRA.

"If it wasn't for the children the flowers would never have been planted in time for the community challenge closing date, we would also like to thank the staff and pupils of the School Completions Programme for giving a hand after class", added Matt.



With the walls painted, flowers planted and the light fading, local artist Cindy Fogarty painted a spectacular mural of the Blessed Virgin Mary on what used to be the wall of her grandparents back garden.

"We can't thank Cindy enough, she painted the mural in an hour and a half, and it was amazing to watch. Residents' are coming now to say prayers and light candles, and every night children visit the garden to say good night to Our Lady. It just goes to show that community spirit is alive and well in Ballinacurra Weston" said Matt.

As the overall winner from the 30 entrants in the Community Challenge the BWRA has been awarded €5,000, which was funded by the JP McManus Charitable Foundation.

"We've named our memory garden The Garden of Hope and the mural Our Lady of Hope, but we never dared to hope that we would win. The money will be spent on finishing the garden and on other beautification projects. We hope to install a plaque dedicated to the memory of residents that have died or that have left the area." said Cathal McCarthy, PRO with the BWRA.

"Working together and creating the garden was a great boost to the community, wining the challenge was the icing on the cake" concluded Cathal



See centre pages for a selection of photographs of the work.

More photo's available from:

www.bwra.blogspot.com

and

Facebook: BWRA Weston



“Diarmuid Gavin is back with a second series of Dirty Old Towns. He'll be getting busy with towns that have let themselves go. And that's where you come in.”

“If you know of an eye sore or ugly waste ground in your town? Does your main street need a makeover? Then we want to hear your story.”

That's the invitation to communities from RTE's hit TV show *Dirty Old Towns*. Well the good news is that Diarmuid and the *Dirty Old Towns* crew have picked here, and you don't have to look too far to find eye-sores in Weston or Prospect.

But *we* didn't let ourselves go – our eye sores are the result of four-and-a-half years of so-called “regeneration”. So who invited *Dirty Old Towns* to our area, why are they here, what are the eye-sores that they are going to help our community tackle and most importantly, where do you come in?

Residents were asked to assemble outside the church on Wednesday, 30th November, at 9.30am to clear and weed the field behind the community centre for the all-weather pitch;

“you don't have to stay the whole day, even just a half an hour of your time will do – Breakfast rolls and refreshments will be provided from the Sit 'n Sip Café”

Small compensation for what we have to live with and endure.

But why this field? Well, if residents work for free then money will be saved and the Regeneration Agency has promised *Dirty Old Towns* that they will put the money back into our community. Regeneration promised lots of things and look where we are today.



Diarmuid Gavin – here to make Regeneration look good?

Ask yourself: can I see the back of the community centre from my house?

There has been little real community involvement in the *Dirty Old Towns* projects and absolutely no consultation about what we would like done. Limerick Civic Trust, the Regeneration Agency and paid Community Workers from outside the area are all looking pretty for the camera, but where are the residents? The whole thing seems to be little more than an expensive Public Relations stunt to make the Regeneration Agency look good to the rest of the world, especially the government.



There is plenty of ugly waste ground and eye-sores to be found in Weston and Prospect that we have to live with. Why not clean them up?

A REAL COMMUNITY CLEAN-UP



The BWRA has €5,000 to spend on community clean-ups in Weston and Prospect in 2012 and we want to hear from you with

In September 2011, the BWRA really cleaned up when we won €5,000 for our community as we were declared overall winner of the Limerick Community Challenge for our Garden of Hope, which is dedicated to the memory of those who have died or left the area.

We will be using this money to start other projects in Weston and Prospect next year and **we want to hear from you** with your ideas.

In 2010 we had secured funding to restore Our Lady's Grotto and establish a memory garden in the area and we had intended to start with the Grotto, but we were prevented from doing so by the powers that be. The Grotto will now be restored by non-residents and this will be filmed for *Dirty Old Towns*.

With the exception of the Grotto, the sites targeted by *Dirty Old Towns* are not eye-sores and are already earmarked for refurbishment, so that's defeating the purpose of the show, if not cheating.

We want our unemployed to get real jobs on the refurbishment works in the community centre, not work for free.

This would be possible if the Regeneration Agency ensures that provision for on-site training and the employment of residents is part of the contract with the developers. This would be in compliance with current EU directives.

We want a regeneration that is centred on community needs and we need a regeneration that puts residents first.

As residents, we have to put ourselves first by taking ownership of our estate and a good way to do that is through Community Gardens. In its rush to get rid of us, the Limerick Regeneration Programme has left plenty of green sites for us to use.

If you are interested in getting together with your neighbours to tackle a genuine eye-sore where you live, then we'd like to hear from you. It is the intention of the BWRA to enter the Tidy Towns competition next year. If you think what we did in 3-days on one site was good, then imagine what we could do in a few weeks on a number of sites.

The BWRA has the equipment and the money to spend on materials; all we need are your ideas and willingness to get involved. Contact: Matt (087 65 77 063) or Cathal (087 78 45 070) if you're interested.



Garden of Hope





CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL INVOLVED!

“Feeling Safe in Our Community”

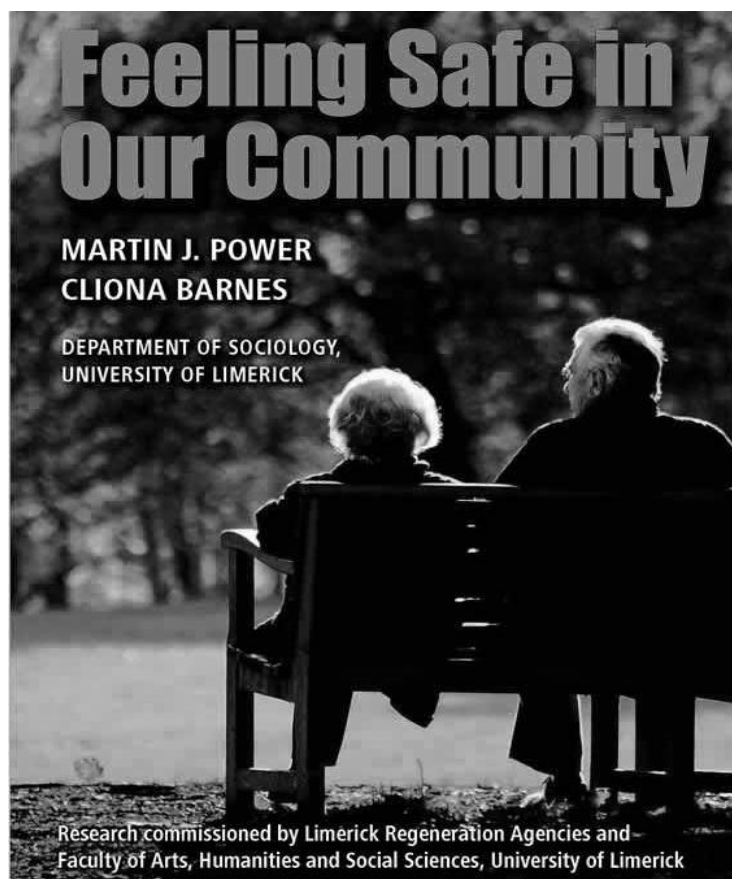
The Ballinacurra Weston Residents' Alliance (BWRA) has welcomed the publication of “Feeling Safe in Our Community” by Dr. Cliona Barnes and Dr. Martin Power of the University of Limerick's Department of Sociology, which was funded by the Limerick Regeneration Agencies and which was launched by TV3's Vincent Browne in Ballinacurra Weston at the West End Youth Centre on Friday November 4th 2011.

“This report highlights the failure of the state to protect its citizens’, the way we were promised in the Fitzgerald Report; we were promised a dedicated Garda service that would ensure a highly visible Garda presence at all times, which was supposed to restore confidence and stability to the community, and that never happened. Unfortunately, the report's findings were overshadowed by Vincent's Browne's comments on the media, bankers and developers, so the report itself received very little coverage” said Matt Collins Chairperson of the BWRA.

While welcoming the report, the BWRA is however, highly critical of the UL's Department of Sociology wilful exclusion of residents from the launch.

“It's been claimed that the BWRA received five invitations to the event, this is simply untrue. Our PRO was asked to supply four names at the eleventh hour, but only after we had distributed a leaflet condemning the exclusion of residents the day before the event”, said Mr. Collins.

“We were aware of the event because our PRO is currently in UL studying for an MA in Sociology and he was under the impression that residents would be informed and invited.”



Cathal McCarthy, PRO for the BWRA, said he was shocked at the exclusion of residents from the event. “I was under the impression that residents who participated in the research would be contacted prior to any launch and would have an opportunity to see the report beforehand as this is considered to be standard ethical practice, this was what Dr. Barnes said would happen during a lecture six weeks prior to the event. I was shocked when it became clear that this wasn't going to be the case”

Mr. McCarthy also challenged the claim by Department Head, Dr. Eoin Devereux, that one third of those invited were “community activists/residents from Moyross and Ballinacurra Weston”.

“Around 75 out of 90 invited guests attended the event and they were mostly from UL and other academic institutions. It is important to distinguish between voluntary community activists that live in the area and paid community workers that don't; the latter were well represented but residents were thin on the ground, in fact there were more residents from Moyross, and the four of them had received formal invitations.” said Mr. McCarthy.

Mr. McCarthy also said that he was contacted by Dr. Power the day before the event after the BWRA had distributed a leaflet informing residents of the event, “I was asked to supply four names for the morning session, which was a symposium on ‘stigmatising neighbourhoods’ as there was a limited number of seats, but it was agreed that residents that sought admittance on the day would be asked to return for the launch of ‘Feeling Safe in Our Community’ in the afternoon”

“I found out afterwards that some residents turned up in the morning but were turned away despite the availability of seats and without being invited back for the afternoon session” said Mr. McCarthy

“There are many recommendations in the Barnes/Power report that would make our community a safer place to live, if they are heeded and implemented. The report is critical of the lack of Gardaí patrolling the areas and of the depopulation process and the manner in which homes are boarded up and left to be vandalised and burnt out, these recommendations deserve more attention in the media than they have received. The report is also critical of the failure of the regeneration agency to communicate with residents and keep us informed”, said Mr. McCarthy.

“It's only a pity that Dr. Barnes and Dr. Power didn't take their own advice and communicate with residents before the launch”, concluded Mr. McCarthy.

The BWRA will issue a full response to the Barnes/Power Report in the coming weeks. However, it is interesting to note that the pdf file, published on the internet by the Limerick Regeneration Agencies in recent days, contains an additional page (p.3) thanking residents for their assistance, which was not included in the hard-copy distributed on the day of the launch.

Read the report @ www.limerickregeneration.org

REGENERATION JOBS: Where are they?

Construction is presently underway on 33 units in Cliona Park, Moyross (20 sheltered apartments and 13 houses) on a community green. The Regeneration Agencies had originally applied to build 40 units, but they were found to be sub-standard in size.

While the Regeneration Agencies had promised that local employment would be a part of any new development, provision for on-site training and the employment of locals was not included in the contract signed with *Clancy Construction*. This is in breach of EU directives on employment and social integration, which states that such provisions should be made when advertising for tenders or during contract negotiations.

Dublin regeneration projects such as Docklands, HARP and Fatima Mansions included provision for local employment and on-site training. Why then have standards been lowered when it comes to Limerick's regeneration programme?

A further 20 sheltered apartments have been approved for Southill with 70 more announced for Edward St. both are also on a previously undeveloped sites with the latter outside the legal remit of the Regeneration Agencies.

Resident's need to act now to ensure that local employment and provision for on-site training is included in the contracts yet to be awarded for these projects.

TIME FOR A COMMUNITY-LED AGENDA

The last four-and-a-half years of the Limerick Regeneration Programme has not benefited the communities of Moyross, Southill, Ballinacurra Weston and St. Mary's Park at all. In many ways we are worse off now that before regeneration came to town.

The so-called 'Master Plans', produced by the Regeneration Agencies in 2008 at a cost of over €2 million, were shelved and a revised programme was approved by the previous government in June 2010, pledging €337 million over the next four years. However, most of this money is for new roads and displacing people.

To date, nearly 1,000 families have been displaced, over 700 homes have been demolished and there are now more boarded-up houses than ever before. The boarding up of homes as people are moved out has led to an increase in anti-social behaviour, encouraging residents to leave.

Homeowners are bought out for a pittance and turned into tenants.

New problems began to emerge as demolition was progressed; collapsed sewage pipes and water mains became live issues in some areas. Little was done by the Agencies to deal with the serious social problems, other than tick the token boxes; the interventions put in place are not equal to the scale of the problems so they can never hope to make a real difference to the overall situation.

Given all the effort and money that has been spent on clearing the land for developers, it is amazing then that when they eventually start to build it is on a previously unoccupied site. Even more amazing is the fact that the Regeneration Agencies failed to include provision for local employment and on-site training in the Moyross contract. This cannot be allowed to happen in the contract for the Southill development or the proposed Edward Street development.

It now looks likely that the Regeneration Agencies will close by Christmas and it is the stated intention of the Government that the regeneration programme will be run by an integrated local authority for Limerick City and County. However, a change of personnel will do little to improve matters unless there is the involvement of residents in a real and meaningful way and an end to the mindless developers' agenda.

What can you do?

- Contact the Regeneration Agencies and demand that they include provision for local employment and on-site training in all future construction contracts.

Southside: Units 12-14B, LEDP, Roxboro Road, Limerick. Tel: 221914 Fax: 316997

Northside: Watch House Cross, Moyross, Limerick. Tel: 458884 Fax: 458647

St. Mary's Park: Verdant Place, Kings Island, Limerick. Tel: 405186 Fax: 406142

E-mail: info@limerickregeneration.ie

- Contact your Councillors and TD's asking them to speak out and make representations.
- Get involved with existing independent residents groups in organising campaigns, protests and demonstrations demanding change, inclusion and real participation.

Ballinacurra Weston Residents Alliance: Matt Collins, 087 65 77 063, www.bwra.blogspot.com

Kincora & Carew Park Concerned Residents: Pat Begley, 087 97 83 848

Moyross Residents' Alliance: Tom Daly, 086 30 58 049, www.mralimerick.com

If you would like to set up a residents' group in your area or affiliate your group with us contact Limerick Regeneration Watch: Cathal McCarthy, 087 78 45 070, www.limerickregeneration.org

Christmas Bingo Bonanza

JACKPOT MUST BE WON ON MONDAY!



On Monday night, 19th December, Our Lady of Lourdes Bingo are going to have a pool of €640, which must be won on the night, as well as spot prizes galore.

Our Lady of Lourdes Community Bingo is celebrating its first year in existence with a Christmas Bonanza night on Monday 19th December.

The Community Bingo started in Our Lady of Lourdes at the beginning of 2011; it is held every Monday night in Our Lady of Lourdes Action Centre and has created great interest at local level. There has been a great community response with people of all age groups attending from the community.

Next Monday night they are going to have a pool of €640 which must be won on the night as well as spot prizes galore.

The project is managed by a group of strong local volunteers, including youth, who came together from a committee and set up the bingo for the benefit of the whole community.

The committee wishes to acknowledge the work of all the volunteers including the Ballinacurra Weston Residents Alliance who give of their free time each week to organise and run the bingo.

The committee are very grateful to the Regeneration Agency, especially Declan Blackett, who has been very supportive of the initiative since its inception. The committee have also had great support from Spar Greenpark who has provided a spot prize each week.

“Community Bingo was very popular in Our Lady of Lourdes for many years” said Mary Timmons, one of the volunteers, “It’s not about the Bingo but about getting the community together. It’s great to see the mixture of age groups meeting up and having a chat in a relaxed atmosphere every week”.

The Bingo Committee is hoping for a great turnout next Monday to celebrate the first year anniversary of the Bingo and to enjoy the Bonanza night.



Community Bingo is on Monday Night's @ 8.30pm in Our Lady of Lourdes Community Centre

BEST EVER

The X factor idea was thought up by Samantha Kiely of STEPS School Completion Programme.

The organisers of the first ever X-Factor to be held in the parish were Ronald Collins, Rachel McCarthy, Shane Stewart and Ailish O'Connell.

We took it on and developed it into, in our opinions; one of the biggest shows to come out of Our Lady of Lourdes community ran by the youth from the area and performed by the local people.

It was an idea to raise funds for the Ballinacurra Weston youth clubs with STEPS School Completion Programme.

Thanks to the tremendous support and turn out by the locals to watch the show. We managed to raise a nice amount of money for the youth clubs for the up and coming year, over €1,000.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone that took part in the show, thanks to the Ballinacurra Weston Residents Alliance and Anthony Collins for doing a great job for supervising the building inside and out for the duration of the show, great job lads.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all our supporters a happy Christmas and a prosperous new year.

Some good news for the New Year, the all-weather playing pitch that we proposed is destined to go ahead in the New Year!

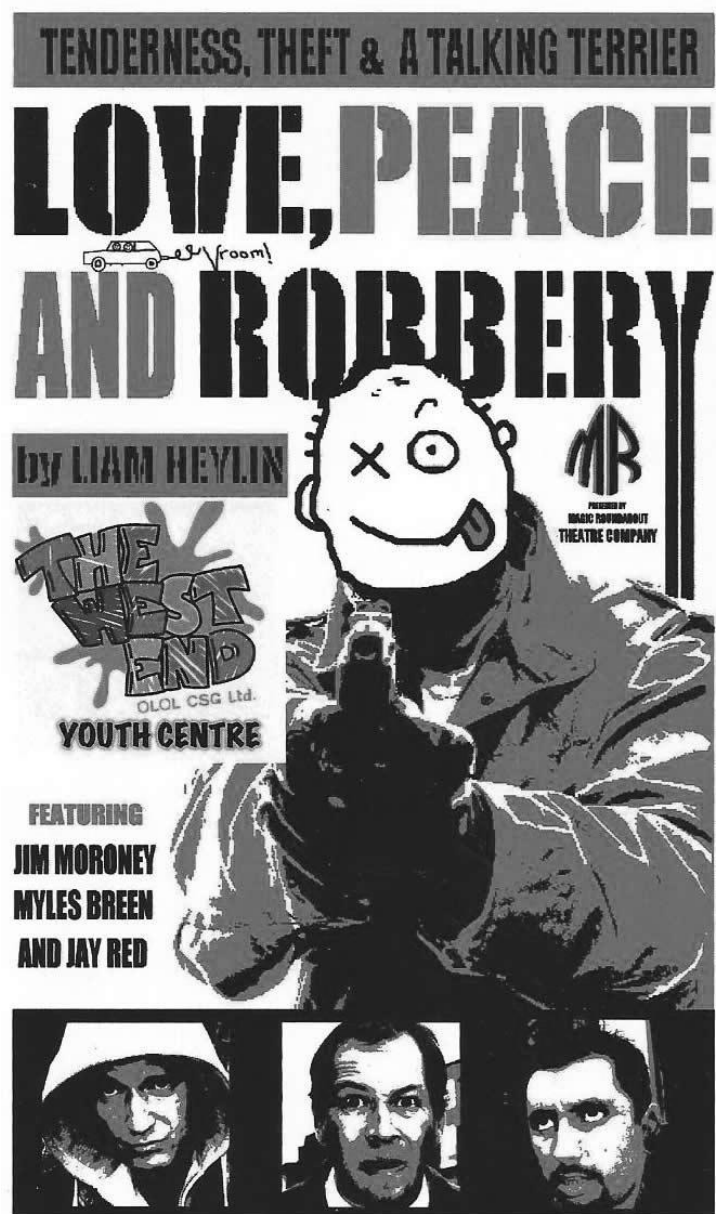
We look forward to that! And we would also like to thank the Southside Regeneration Agency for their magnificent help in securing the funding for the excellent project, especially Declan Blackett who met with us regularly.

We would especially like to thank the Ballinacurra Weston Residents' Alliance for working to ensure that sanitary facilities will be provided for as part of the all-weather pitch and for fighting for local people to be employed in the development.

– Ronald Collins



Rachel McCarthy and Ronald Collins host the X-Factor



The BWRA sponsored the play *Love, Peace and Robbery* during its run at the Belltable in November, with a special performance at the West End Youth Centre.

For those of you that missed it, the play is about two ex-cons just out of Limerick Prison. They are required to attend a daily substance abuse programme. This along with a pair of court-ordered curfews leaves them with limited opportunity to reconnect with those they've wronged in the past: girlfriends, stepsons and one particularly put upon terrier.

The ex-cons were played by Jim Moroney and Jay Red, who were brilliant. Myles Breen, who played a host of characters (Guard, witness, stepson, wife, terrier, etc.), stole the show.

Magic Roundabout Theatre Company was responsible for this production, and it did not disappoint.

Fast paced and extremely funny, the play was well received by the audience at the West End, this was one that will be talked about for a while yet.

The play was directed by Darren Maher of Weston Gardens, who along with the actors and producer, Zeb Moore, answered questions from the audience after the play and gave advice to those that might be interested in a career in theatre.

A Memorial Service will be held in the Garden of Hope
Clarina Avenue, Ballinacurra Weston

On Sunday 18th December @ 8pm

Residents from Regeneration areas and the wider community are invited to attend. The service will be conducted by the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal (Monks of Moyross). Bring a candle and a personal prayer for those you want to remember. All are welcome.



Lucy's Angels, The West End Youth Centre and Our Lady of Lourdes CSG

Cordially Invite You To Our

Christmas Show & Charity Art Auction

On Wednesday 21st December at 7.30pm in the West End Youth Centre

€2 Entrance: All proceeds go to Milford Hospice

RSVP: Pamela Keogh, 085 1678053, pamela.keogh@olocsg.ie



Mary Immaculate College
In conjunction with
Family Support Initiative
Presents
Carols in the Community
Monday December 19th
1:15pm-1:50pm
Our Lady of Lourdes Community
Action Centre
All Are Welcome



The Ballinacurra Weston Residents' Alliance
wishes all our members and supporters
A Happy Christmas & A Peaceful New Year
nollaig faoi shéan is faoi mhaise