

# Our Community, **Our Vision** Our Future

Regeneration of  
**Southill and Ballinacurra Weston**



LIMERICK SOUTHSIDE  
**REGENERATION**  
AGENCY



**“The regeneration or rebirth of certain parts of Limerick City will challenge all of us about how seriously we understand the meaning of the birth we are celebrating”**



Christmas Message (2007) From:  
Dr. Donal Murray,  
Bishop of Limerick  
Dr. Michael Mayes,  
Bishop of Limerick, Killaloe and Ard Fert.





# Background

The Limerick Regeneration Agencies, Southside and Northside, were established by Ministerial orders S.I. 275/276/2007, on the 15th June 2007. Both Agencies were charged with the task of designing and implementing a comprehensive and integrated Masterplan for the areas of Moyross on the Northside and Southill/Ballinacurra Weston on the Southside of Limerick.

On the 25th June 2007 Mr. Brendan Kenny took up the appointment as interim Chief Executive for both agencies, with Mr. John Fitzgerald appointed Chairperson for both Boards of Directors.

The boards comprise of senior representatives from all the relevant Government Departments, together with the Gardaí and Health Services Executive. They also include representatives of the community and business sectors in both areas.

To foster ongoing community partnership, local Regeneration Committees have been set up comprising of local residents, community groups, Gardaí and local authority officials and include Independent Chairpersons.

## Limerick Southside Regeneration Board of Directors:

Mr. John Fitzgerald	Chairperson
Mr. Brendan Kenny	Chief Executive
Mr. Liam Mc Elligott	CEO, Limerick Enterprise Development Partnership
Fr. Pat Hogan	Parish Priest, Southill
Ms. Anne Kavanagh	Manager, PAUL Partnership
Mr. William Keane	Chief Superintendent – Gardaí Síochana
Mr. John Laffan	Dept. of Environment, Heritage and Local Government
Ms. Kathleen Stack	Dept. of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
Ms. Mary Moloney	Dept. of Social and Family Affairs
Ms. Michelle Shannon	Dept. of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
Mr. Pat Mc Sitric	Dept. of Education and Science
Mr. Pat Fitzgerald	Health Services Executive
Mr. Tom Mackey	Limerick City Manager
Mr. Ned Gleeson	Limerick County Manager
Mr. Alec Fleming	Clare County Manager

## Local Southill and Ballinacurra/Weston Regeneration Committees:

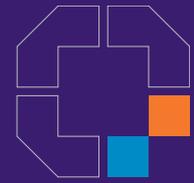
Mr. Phil Mortell Independent Chairperson

### Staff

Mr. Brendan Hayden (Director) Mr. Kieran Ryan (Asst. Director)

## Project Managers:

Ms. Claire Feeney Masterplanning	Mr. Declan Blackett Education	Ms. Elaine O'Connor Children and Youth Sports and Leisure Arts and Culture	Ms. Gwen Ryan Research and Evaluation Health and Employment Community Development
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# Foreword by Chairperson

At the end of my report, which was submitted to the Government's Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion in March 2007, I said that the interventions recommended in my report could be put in place very quickly.

In this context I am very pleased and impressed by the speed in which the new Agencies have been set up, opened for business, the level of consultation undertaken and the profile achieved.

I am also pleased with the very strong level of Government support that has been evident over recent months for regeneration in Limerick City and I appreciate the support and goodwill that we have been getting from all Government Departments and local agencies.

With this type of support and assistance I am very confident that the much needed transformation of these areas can and will be achieved.

The task is not an easy one and will not happen overnight and since the Agencies have been setup and through my work as Chairperson it is quite clear that the situation is as bleak as I outlined in my Report.

The three critical strands are intensive policing intervention, economic and infrastructural regeneration and a coordinated response to social and educational disadvantage.

This vision document, which is the vehicle for the implementation of the recommendations in my report, has come from the community and is for the community, addresses these strands and provides

a clear roadmap towards the development and implementation of social, physical and economic regeneration of this area.

**The challenge is to transform this area into one of the most vibrant and most sustainable suburbs in the country.**

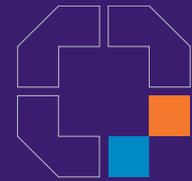
These vision proposals were endorsed by the Limerick Southside Regeneration Agency Board at its meeting held on Monday 7th of January 2008. The Regeneration Agency through its Board of Directors, Chief Executive and staff will drive the implementation of the proposals outlined. I will report on progress to the Government's Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion on a regular basis.

The Master Planning consultants will commence their work in late February with the aim of finalising a social, physical and economic Masterplan by the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2008 (which will put the detail to the vision proposals).

All going well we hope to begin construction of new homes in early 2009.

As Chairperson of the Regeneration Board together with the Chief Executive and his staff, we will work tirelessly along with all Government Agencies and local communities towards full implementation of this vision.

John Fitzgerald  
Chairperson  
Limerick Southside  
Regeneration Agency



# Introduction

I took up my post of Interim Chief Executive of the Limerick Southside and Northside Regeneration Agencies on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June 2007.

Since then I have spoken to and listened to many people including residents, community representatives, public representatives and officials from statutory and non-statutory organisations in Limerick City.

While the problems in these estates are not unique in the country, I consider the scale of the problems unique and certainly worse than anything that I have personally encountered during my 27 year career working on Housing and Social issues in Dublin City.

However the time has now come to move on and to put full concentration and energy on providing solutions and achieving regeneration.

**This document sets out a broad vision as to what needs to be done as a result of consultation carried out with a wide range of stakeholders including residents. The Vision Document is a work in progress, and may change over the coming months as the Masterplan is developed. The content of this document will act as a brief and guide for the consultants who will be engaged to complete the Masterplan.**

This document sets out a vision as to how social, physical and economic regeneration will be planned and implemented. It is a vision that has come from the community and it is a vision that the Southside Regeneration Agency is totally committed to carrying out fully in the short, medium and long term.

I have been amazed at the resilience and good humour of residents despite living in a very difficult environment, some of it quite appalling and I have also been impressed with their willingness to participate and get involved with the work of the Agency. While the document may contain some strong statements and recommendations, they do however, clearly reflect the opinions expressed by those that we engaged with in the consultation process.

I was surprised at the very low expectations of many residents and their apparent general acceptance of living conditions and environment and also their lack of

faith or confidence in many of the state's key services. It was interesting to hear a reaction from many residents when the term 'early wins' was mentioned to them. They sought to feel safe in their homes, to feel that their children were safe, public lighting that worked, better public lighting, control of horses and dogs, general cleansing and upkeep, and that those who engaged in anti-social behaviour would be 'taken away'. They certainly deserve better, and it is incumbent on all of us to deliver for them a far better quality of life and an address to be proud of.

We have received a high level of support, co-operation and assistance from all state agencies, both those based locally and those based in Dublin and this augers well for a coordinated and integrated approach to regeneration, which is essential.

In our consultation with residents we primarily sought their views on what type of community/environment that they would like to have in the future. In particular we asked people to think about the future for their children and grand children.

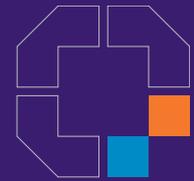
Many residents quite understandably sought detailed answers to questions about their individual situation and what exact implications the regeneration would have for them as individual householders.

We will be in a stronger position in the coming months to answer all these questions as plans develop and we guarantee that there will be further intensive and one to one consultation and discussion with all residents in the early weeks and months of 2008.

I want to give special thanks to residents for their courtesy, support and patience and to the many community representatives who we have worked with over recent months.

I look forward to working with all stakeholders to ensure that all of the vision outlined in this document is achieved.

Brendan Kenny  
Chief Executive  
Limerick Southside  
Regeneration Agency



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# 1.0

## Southside Regeneration



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# 1.0 Southside Regeneration

## 1.0 Southside Regeneration

The Southside Regeneration consists of three separate projects:

- **O'Malley Park and Keyes Park**
- **Carew Park and Kincora Park**
- **Clarina, Crecora and Beechgrove.**

The first two are in the parish of Southill, while the third is in the neighbouring parish of Ballinacurra Weston. There are 600 houses in O'Malley Park and 160 in Keyes Park. Carew and Kincora Park have 400 houses, and there are 200 in Ballinacurra Weston. Overall, this represents 1360 houses.

- The housing estates of O'Malley Park and Keyes Park will be totally rebuilt
- The housing estates of Carew Park and Kincora Park will be retained and refurbished
- The housing estates of Clarina, Crecora and Beechgrove will be totally rebuilt.

**A number of residents have expressed concern about demolition or non-demolition of their homes. We will consult further and sensitively with these people over the coming weeks and months.**

The regeneration will also include all lands adjacent to these estates.

The Fitzgerald Report clearly outlines the problems and issues associated with the area. This document sets out the range of short, medium and long term solutions required to bring about a proper quality of life and environment for all residents in and around the Southill and Ballinacurra areas.

A key objective in the ultimate Masterplan will be the renewal/rebuild of the existing public housing with a strong emphasis on management and enforcement. A further key objective is the creation of a much more balanced social mix of housing by the provision of private and affordable housing.



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# 2.0

## Housing and Community Regeneration



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## 2.0 Housing and Community Regeneration

### 2.1 Housing

- Modern quality homes will be constructed for all eligible households who wish to remain in the area.
- In the meantime, all derelict houses and houses becoming vacant in these areas will be demolished for safety and security reasons.
- As the new homes are constructed the old houses will be demolished.



- The new estates will be small clusters and will have all security risks designed out.
- Some good families have been forced out of their existing homes in recent times through harassment and intimidation. These people will get a **written commitment** that they will be offered a new home back in the regenerated area.
- The housing estate of Carew and Kincora will get a comprehensive refurbishment, including precinct enhancement and new community facilities.
- The agency will work closely with the residents of Weston Gardens, adjacent to Clarina/Crecora, in the development of solutions to the serious problems that they have encountered over the years.
- The number of new 'social' homes constructed will be limited to the needs of those currently residing in the area, and those wishing and eligible to return.
- All other homes to be constructed in the area will be for private ownership, including ownership under the various government Affordable Housing Schemes.
- A number of small retirement housing complexes will be constructed at an early stage of the regeneration.
- The new homes and estates will be developed to meet the needs of persons with disabilities.
- A long term strategy for the accommodation of Travellers and the management of such accommodation at Clonlong will be prioritised.

- A major effort will be made to promote home-ownership amongst existing tenants. The aim is the creation of new homes that will enable residents to purchase them from day one, including the opportunity of Incremental Purchase or Shared Ownership.
- Selection of households for the new homes will be made between 6 and 12 months in advance in order to facilitate training and support.
- A new 'Contract of Accommodation' will replace the existing Tenancy Agreement.
- Much stronger monitoring and enforcement of the 'Contract of Accommodation' will be implemented.
- Short term contracts or transitional housing will be considered as an appropriate response to the needs of some families.
- The concept of new types of Social Housing Management in the future will get early and strong consideration.

Opportunities to take advantage of new technology, e-learning and passive security will be maximised.

The Agency will work very closely with Limerick City Council, the Gardaí and the communities in order to improve the management of the existing estates while we await the implementation of the regeneration.

**Engagement in Anti-social activity by a household (or any member of that household) will very seriously jeopardize their opportunity of getting a new or refurbished home in the regeneration proposals. A certificate of eligibility will be required from the Gardaí and local authority prior to any offer being made.**

It is important to clarify that rebuild and refurbishment proposals will not require any significant displacement of residents to other areas.

Concerns raised about this issue throughout Limerick are understandable, and the Agency is happy to consult with residents associations etc. in areas outside the designated regeneration estates.

It is essential that current practices, protocols and local policies on housing issues be urgently reviewed in an integrated and regional approach by the key agencies involved i.e.

- Limerick City Council
- Limerick County Council
- Clare County Council
- Health Services Executive (Rent Supplement)

Local Authorities in the Limerick Region (outside Limerick City) must give stronger consideration to the current social housing needs of Limerick City residents, and plan for the future appropriately. The purchase of houses by Limerick City Council outside its administrative and political boundary is not a sustainable method of achieving the regional

approach that is required, even though the purchase of houses generally will have to remain as a key method of providing social housing.

A strategy and a set of policies are required on the 'Management of Housing', which includes social housing, private housing, affordable housing, Rent Supplement and Rent Assistance Scheme (RAS). While this is a national issue, the Regeneration Agency is willing to facilitate such a process in the Limerick Area.

The fact that private landlords can avail of Rent Supplement (a subsidy from the State) but remain totally anonymous, and not accept any responsibility for the management of their dwelling to the detriment of neighbours, is not sustainable any longer. While the legal responsibility of the Health Services Executive should be protected, they do not have responsibility for ongoing monitoring or management. The Agency will strive to develop more transparent and more manageable arrangements around this issue through the Gardaí, local authority and landlord.

## 2.2 Housing Design

The homes will be designed in small clusters to provide additional security and identity for residents. The houses will be provided with a maximum of three or four per terrace. Each house will have a front and back garden, with parking for one car in the driveway. Each cluster of housing will have a public, open space that is passively supervised by overlooking properties. The houses will be designed to provide security for residents. The layout will ensure that all potential areas that could lead to anti-social behaviour are designed out.

The new homes provided in the new development will be bigger than the existing houses.



While existing green open spaces will undoubtedly have to be reconfigured and improved, the Masterplan will include significant provision for new, safer and more usable open spaces throughout the regenerated areas.

There will be a variety of designs to give each cluster its own identity. Each house will be designed and fitted out to the highest standards with all modern conveniences, including:

- fitted kitchens
- fitted wardrobes
- tiling in kitchen and bathrooms
- ensuite bathrooms
- downstairs WC

In order to ensure individuality for households, a selection of finishes will be offered for kitchen and bathroom suites and finishes.

## 2.3 Retirement Housing

Some Retirement housing complexes will be provided as part of the new development. The complexes will have a mixture of dwelling types that will be centred around a courtyard. It will provide additional security for residents but be close to all amenities, with a common area for the provision of Meals-on-Wheels and to allow for social interaction within the complexes and in the immediate neighbourhood. Facilities for services such as Hairdressing, a Public Health Nurse, a Doctor and Chiropodist will also be included.





## 2.4 Community Facilities and Community Partnership

- A range of appropriate community facilities (we very much welcome the construction of the new Community Youth Centre in O'Malley Park) will be provided in order to promote strong participation of all residents in the new estates. We will work closely with the community in relation to this, at both a general area level and at estate level.
- Strong consideration and emphasis will be put on the possibility of the community themselves having the capacity and support to effectively manage their own estates.
- The possibility of a community based management association or company running the new estates will be seriously considered, e.g. rent collection, grass cutting, landscaping and general management functions.

The local area Community Officers (Estate Workers) are currently key players in the community, and can play a key role in the development of the above possibilities.

## 2.5 Policing and Estate Management

The Fitzgerald Report clearly outlines that policing intervention is essential. Progress has already been made on this issue, with over 60 additional Gardaí being assigned to Limerick, and the very strong working relationship that has been developed between the agency and local Gardaí. However, a lot more is required.

- A radical new approach to policing in this community will be promoted.
- People must get an environment where they feel secure in their homes, feel their children are safe and feel unthreatened by the activities of some local youths and children.
- A normalised situation must be achieved where people regain faith in policing. Where people as a matter of course contact the Gardaí to report instances of crime, intimidation and harassment and help to create a situation where they can feel reasonably safe from retribution for such contact, and where they no longer feel that there is no point in contacting the Gardaí.

- The visible presence of Gardaí must be increased while the unique situation exists, e.g. before and during regeneration.
- The perception that some percentage of people committing crime and anti-social behaviour are 'getting away with it' will have to be dispelled.
- The small number of families causing havoc must get absolute and constant attention from the Gardaí
- The Gardaí must get ongoing co-operation, support and assistance from the landlord (Limerick City Council) and other agencies such as the Health Services Executive.
- A C.A.B (Criminal Assets Bureau) type approach by all state agencies must be taken against the perpetrators of crime, intimidation, harassment and anti-social behaviour by ensuring:
  - Strong enforcement of the terms and conditions of Tenancy Agreements.
  - Strong enforcement of rent regulation and rules.
  - Strong enforcement of planning regulations.
  - Strong enforcement of condition of sale, purchase and re-sale.
  - Linkage with welfare payments.

- Linkage with revenue commissioners.
- Full implementation of estate management powers such as eviction, exclusion orders, ASBO's etc.

The agency will arrange for an urgent review of existing landlord responsibilities and power on anti-social behaviour, and will, if necessary, make recommendations to Government to alter the legislation currently in place.

It is important to retain the existing role and responsibility of the landlord within this legislation, but the actual testifying in court, for example, would be more appropriate for Gardaí.

**Most of the above refer to short-term actions because in the future the 'Contract of Accommodation' will have such enforcement principles as a matter of course.**

It is very important to recognise that the Gardaí alone cannot solve all these complex problems, but quite often they are left on their own to pick up the pieces where other state services have failed or have been inadequate. For example if there are young children out of control (sometimes seriously threatening people) what are the Gardaí expected to do? It is not clear what other services have a role in this. The agency will address these issues as comprehensively and realistically as possible.



# 3.0

## Social Regeneration



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## 3.0 Social Regeneration



### 3.1 Education

Limerick City can rightly boast of an impressive array of educational institutions and services. It's University, Institute of Technology and Teacher Training College are nationally and internationally recognised centres of excellence. In addition there are many outstanding pre-schools, primary schools and secondary schools. Opportunities also exist for second chance education, further and higher education, community adult education, as well as private second level and third level education. Provision exists too for those with special educational needs and early school leavers. There is, however, another side to education in Limerick that does not auger well for the City, unless it is systematically and comprehensively addressed, namely educational disadvantage.

Therefore, initiatives to address educational disadvantage will have to be prioritised during the course of the regeneration. This strategy will identify how schools can be supported, not only in developing their facilities, but also in providing a comprehensive range of services to pupils both in and out-of-school. These services should extend to looking at how Special Education Needs, the development of School Infrastructure, Education Welfare, Psychological Support and Counselling can all be encompassed within the framework of provision. In addition Adult Education, Access and Outreach programmes, should also be considered as to how they can support the regeneration communities.

### Educational Leadership

The Regeneration Agencies are enthused by the leadership, cooperation and support given by the staff at the Department of Education and Science Regional Offices, at Punces Cross, during the process of developing this vision. We recommend that the Mid-Western Educational Regional Office should be strengthened in its capacity, and have devolved authority, to deliver on the actions set out in this vision document.

### Towards a Vision for Education In Limerick City

A culture of **change for improvement** is required in order to enhance the quality of learning in a developmental and meaningful way. This will be achieved by:

- The Regeneration Agencies engaging with the Department of Education & Science in the **strategic planning** of education.
- Working with the Department of Education & Science as it carries out **an audit of educational services and programmes**.
- **Providing special measures** for education over the term of the regeneration.
- Recommending **financial supports** where necessary.

### Issues and Actions

There are many issues and problems that have nothing to do with education. During the consultation process it was suggested that some parents, guardians and children are afraid to approach school gates, due mainly to threats, hostilities and feuding.

- Further **community policing and community safety measures would go a long way towards ensuring children can safely access the education on offer in schools**.
- Some children present for school hungry, and unprepared for the day ahead.
- **Schools should be facilitated in providing school meals**.
- **It is also recommended that funding be enhanced to support after-school groups and homework clubs**.

### The National Educational Welfare Board

The chronic incidence of non-school attendance at school is significantly above the current local capacity of the NEWB to address. This is due to a lack of existing resources and strategies, and presents as a challenge to that organisation.

Therefore, it is recommended by the Regeneration Agencies that at least one Educational Welfare Officer [EWO] be appointed specifically for the Southside of

Limerick. A drop-in or clinic type facility should also be attached to this role, to facilitate easy and ready access to pursue non-school attendance, decide on education welfare needs and address the issue of truancy.

### Counselling and Assessment

The current system of psychological services for assessment and counselling is wholly inadequate to meet the many needs that exist for children and adolescents. There is a deficiency in service delivery for educational assessments, special education resources and provision, as well as a lack of counselling for children with emotional difficulties in many of our schools. Therefore:

- Current National Education Psychological Service [NEPS] **provision must be extended to meet the assessment needs of pupils** from the Regeneration Areas.
- **Special education needs provision must be delivered** in a cost effective and timely manner, particularly in the designated regeneration areas.
- A more integrated approach is needed by the Department of Education and Science and the Health Service Executive around the provision of counselling for children and adolescents.
- **Services in Limerick should be provided for those with autism**.
- **In addition, every primary and secondary school serving the Regeneration Areas should have a full-time psychological counsellor**. A significant step towards achieving this would be for the Department of Education and Science to fund the art and music therapy service currently being provided to many regeneration area schools, by the Blue Box Creative Learning Centre.

### Pre-school

Children living in the Regeneration Areas should also have the best quality **pre-school provision**. This **must include active learning, as well as cognitive, language and social development**.

- The promotion of home-learning and parental involvement should be part of this provision.
- Links between pre-school and mainstream primary education are necessary to **ensure continuity of learning** for parents and children in their dealings with the education system and local schools.
- **Pre-school provision should be rolled out for each primary school serving the Regeneration Areas**.

### Early School Leaving

Welcome extensions have been secured for 2nd chance education for early school leavers, through Youthreach. **However, there is a glaring gap in services and provision for early school leavers, particularly in the 12-15 year age group.**

The only provision that exists for this age group in Limerick City is the Youth Encounter Project (St Augustine's), which is currently unable to accommodate the required number of places. In addition it has been operating in less than satisfactory working and learning conditions.

The Department of Education and Science should consider:

- Enhancing support for the current Youth Encounter Project facility and service.
- Putting in place another Youth Encounter Project [or similar type model], in the Centre of the City, to cater for those who drop-out or are forced out-of-school in the 12-15 year age group. A city centre location provides ease of access, militates against stigma and social exclusion, and brings young people together in a supportive, educational structure.
- Consider making more use of St. Canice's High Support Unit.
- Extending NEPS and National Council for Special Education (NCSE) provision for Youthreach and the Youth Encounter Project
- It is also a recommendation of the Regeneration Agencies, that a system of tracking and monitoring of all young people in the Regeneration Areas be established. This mechanism would identify those at risk of dropping out of mainstream services, as well as identifying agencies and services required to support them. The Agencies have begun the initial scoping brief for such a process.

### School Infrastructure

Many of the schools in the Regeneration Areas have top of the range facilities, while others are in need of serious repair and remedial work. Conversely, other schools lack resources for basic security and caretaking. The suspension of the Summer Work Scheme is causing concern to schools in the area and it is imperative that this issue is addressed. To this end the Regeneration Agency will work with the Department of Education and Science's **School Accommodation Commission** and its report for Limerick City.

**In addition, the regeneration of the area provides an opportunity to radically consider school buildings; e.g. possible demolition and new build, along with other infrastructural work.**

- **All schools serving the Regeneration Areas should be granted** a range of works as a matter of priority. Furthermore, the following schools are being recommended by the Regeneration Agencies for urgent remedial works and refurbishment.

1. Galvone NS, Southill – New Dining Hall, Parents Room, Library, External Play area & safety matting, refurbishment of the Main Play Ground Area.
2. Our Lady of Lourdes NS, Ballinacurra Weston – requires security measures such as electronic doors & cameras, a full-time caretaker is also needed. The school urgently requires upgrading its plumbing and toilets.
3. Southill Junior School (O'Malley Park) – The Regeneration Agency supports this school in their efforts to meet the needs of the children they serve in the heart of Southill. To this end demolition and new build is recommended.
4. Our Lady Queen of Peace NS – For Health & Safety concerns the front gate needs widening, wheelchair access is needed at the school doors. The school Hall needs to be revamped with adequate spacing and stage provided for. The pre-school facilities of the school need to be enhanced.
5. The Regeneration Agency will work with the Gael Scoil in Southill, to potentially identify a location for the school in the Regeneration Area.



### School and it's role within the community:

The role of schools is critical in tackling social exclusion and improving access for communities. School buildings and facilities should also be quality neighbourhood hubs for community education, learning and development.

- Additional investment should be directed at maximising the use of **school buildings and facilities** to become hubs of learning that offer open spaces and ICT resources **outside of school hours**.
- **Schools should therefore open their doors to facilitate after-school, homework clubs and holiday time programmes.**

### Personnel resources for Schools

A worrying development for schools on both the Southside and Northside of Limerick City is that student numbers are declining. This adversely affects the development of a cohesive community spirit within these areas. Furthermore, there is a real danger that resources and personnel will be lost to these areas, which will further disadvantage the schools concerned.

- **Current teacher allocations at primary and secondary levels must be maintained for the term of the regeneration programme. In addition every DEIS Band 1 School in Limerick City should be allocated administrative principal status.**
- Supportive measures for St. Enda's Community College that would positively impact on access, attendance, retention, literacy, numeracy and ICT development
- While recognising the existing level of SNA provision, every Regeneration School should have a Classroom Assistant for every class group, to support less able students.
- Supports should be provided for teachers to enable them to deal with crisis and behaviour management issues. Teacher training and in-service should also be looked at as to how it can equip teachers to work more effectively in disadvantaged area schools.

### Common Application System

- The **common application system for secondary schools** (unique to Limerick City), must also be scrutinised as to its effectiveness. School enrolment policies at 2nd level must be **proactive in terms of its intake of pupils from marginal and disadvantaged groups.**
- The Department of Education and Science in conjunction with school Patrons and School Boards of Management should establish criteria to

ensure **secondary schools in Limerick are being proactive in facilitating social inclusion.**

### The VEC

**The VEC is a major player within the region in terms of education provision, and so has a significant role to play in providing quality education in the regeneration communities.**

- **Efforts to improve access and retention in secondary schools should include the development of flexible curricula that offer relevant vocational activities for young people.** These should be linked to apprenticeships and other Vocational Education Training (VET) programmes, so that quality pathways to employment and/or further education can be achieved.

### Further and Community Adult Education

Community adult education appears to be the poor relation of adult learning within the City, yet is considered fundamental in the whole regeneration process. However, much of the provision appears disparate and ad hoc. In order to promote the development of Life Long Learning in the regeneration communities, the following is required:

- The VEC should carry out an **audit of Adult and Further Education**, with a view to identifying best practice, co-ordination of services and management of the same.
- Recognition of the work currently done, through **raising the profile and visibility of community based adult learning**, and the development of Limerick Community Education Network (LCEN) and Learn Local.
- **Further funding is needed to support tutors, facilities and additional co-ordination personnel**, so that Further Education and Community Adult Education is sustainable and effective in the immediate and long term.

The Regeneration Agency will work with the VEC to provide a new premises for a Community Adult and Further Education Centre in the Southill Regeneration Area.

### ACCESS Programmes and Higher Education

Access programmes at 3rd level have the potential to impact positively on the economic and social capital of individuals and communities.

- **Higher education institutions must be more proactive in facilitating access to 3rd level** for those from disadvantaged and minority backgrounds, as well as those with disabilities and mature students **from across the Regeneration Areas.**

- Access must also be considered an integral aspect of Higher Education provision, and be funded appropriately to meet the needs of the above groups.

#### Outreach and Family Support

Outreach must be an essential aspect of education provision in disadvantaged communities.

- Every school servicing the Regeneration Areas should have its own Home / School Community Liaison Co-ordinator.
- The School Completion Programme [SCP], aims to maximise pupil participation in school, prevent early school leaving and facilitate school retention. As a measure it engages pupils from primary & secondary and early school leavers, in a range of supports and provisions, such as primary / secondary transfer supports, in-school, out-of-school, after-school and holiday-time programmes. For it to become more effective it should be mainstreamed and put on a par with the National Education Welfare Board and the Home School Community Liaison scheme, as a matter of urgency.

#### Education and Training

- Employers and public agencies must work together to identify high quality work related training opportunities, arising from regeneration activities.
- It is crucial that in the regeneration; The VEC, FAS, employers, further and higher institutions of educations, offer quality work-related training opportunities, e.g. pre-apprenticeship programmes, apprenticeships, training and enterprise development initiatives.



- Training and education opportunities must also provide for those with cognitive, sensory and mobility impairments.

#### E-inclusion

Finally, local and international research highlights that in disadvantaged communities there tends to be a lack of digital literacy, where economic and / or technical barriers to internet access, together with a lack of capability to use new technology, can be key causes of digital exclusion, and thereby a further means of exclusion from full participation in modern society. Therefore, **digital literacy, access and use, are key to any effective social inclusion measure and e-inclusion strategy.**

- Free wireless internet access should be made available to the Southside of the City (e.g. Wi Max technology). An increase in home computing ownership (see the Home Computing Initiative) should be promoted. Staff and resources should be put in place on the Southside to facilitate self access and learning information centres. The range of ICT learning opportunities should be expanded. This will be achieved by working with the relevant bodies to put in place ICT development workers in the regeneration communities.



### 3.2 Children, Youth & Family Support

There are many services providing for children and young people in the area, ranging from statutory to voluntary and community. Most of these are receiving some measure of public funding and are doing a good job in their own right. However, the strategic coordination and inter-agency accountability of these services needs significant improvement. There are some good local examples that contradict this but essentially these are a coalition of the willing, operating at an informal level due to the goodwill and determination of front line workers.

Children and young people want something constructive to do with their time. With a child only spending 15% of their time in school, how they occupy the rest is of huge importance to their personal and emotional development. High quality recreation areas and accessible services are crucial to the growth of young people and the social development of an area. There is a duty for these public and voluntary services to connect with and occupy children and youth, keeping the best interests of the young person to the fore at all times.

Issues of safety and fear are prevalent. Young people often don't feel wanted or welcome in their communities due to the anti-social behaviour and intimidation that surrounds them. Young people feel that youth services tend to be hard to reach, whilst youth services report feeling invisible. This inaccessibility and disengagement has led to children as young as 10 years old being involved in serious crime. Young people registered with the probation services often display little or no sense of identity with regards to their role in society, and this is difficult to overcome in the current system.

#### Towards a Vision for Children, Young People & Family Support

Children, youth and their families need to feel more valued in the Regeneration Areas. To tackle the current inadequacies in service provision, it is felt that a more strategic and integrated approach needs to be adopted. There needs to be a requirement for agencies to share information and jointly devise plans for children and families in need of support. Agencies need to recognise and legitimise the value of such working, and be accountable for their actions. Project workers need to be clearer about each others remits and lines of responsibility. Good quality facilities, services and activities need to be provided for the different age groups in a user friendly and welcoming way. Parents need to know where they can turn to for support should they need it.



#### Key objectives

- To keep children **safe and well**.
- To **support** children and their families to become **active citizens**.
- To ensure greater **integration and accountability** of the services to each other and the service users.
- To **tackle the deficit** of facilities and services (generic and targeted) for all children and youth in the areas.
- To **re-integrate difficult young people and their families** into mainstream services.

#### Issues and Actions

##### Policy Context

There are numerous state, semi-state and voluntary organisations and agencies operating in the Regeneration Areas, and in the wider Limerick area, with responsibility for children and youth. While many of these bodies are doing good work and providing essential services where they are needed, some questions have been raised regarding integration and coordination.





- A detailed **audit and evaluation of all services** provided for children and youth will be undertaken and will provide baseline information. A web-based directory detailing all relevant services and facilities for children and youth will be produced, targeted at parents and professionals.
- Young people need to have a voice in how they live, learn, work and play through locally based **youth forums** and **junior leadership** initiatives. Likewise, parents voices need to be heard.
- A **city-wide strategy for children and youth** needs to be established via the new Limerick City Children’s Services Committee, reporting nationally to the Office of the Minister for Children. The plan will meet the requirements of the 1991 Child Care Act, Children Act 2001 and Youth Work Act 2001.
- **Models of good practice will be further developed** in childrens and youth services and research commissioned to gauge effectiveness.

**Early Years Provision**

Many children in the Regeneration Areas appear to be entering primary school without the core developmental skills of an average 5 year old. These children are evidencing difficulties with speech and language communication, concentration, gross and fine motor skills, sensory attachment and obesity. Alongside the section on Pre-school in 3.1, it is recommended that:

- Recognition be given that early childhood services have a key role to play in children’s emotional and social wellbeing and preparing them for successful experiences in formal schooling. **National quality standards should be adopted to ensure the quality of staff training and service.**
- Initiatives such as **Community Mothers, Teen**

**Parents, drop-in parent and toddler groups and Incredible Years** are resourced to provide support to parents and child development. Therapeutic services, if expanded, could be linked to these in an informal setting for the parents and fun environment for the children.

**Services**

There are many outlets for young people to develop themselves, their skills, hobbies and talents, though they can often be inaccessible. There is insufficient strategic integration of all existing services with the child and family at the core at all times. Information is frequently not being shared between agencies due to data protection constraints. This is compounded by the under-resourcing of key front line services, leading to current resources focussing on crisis and not prevention. The Regeneration Agency proposes to: -

- **Evaluate the functions and posts within current out-of-school children and youth services with a view to identifying good practice, gaps in provision and the need for additional community based workers.** Any such appointments would operate to agreed standards, be fully accountable and have common reporting. These visible and accessible street-based posts would have programme budgets for preventative out-of-school activities in order to connect with young people and find things they like to do to occupy themselves. There needs to be greater recognition of the importance of this type of intervention in the social and emotional development of young people.
- **A forum of relevant practitioners and managers** serving young people and their families in terms of social and educational development. This will ensure that practical supports are provided on an ongoing basis to children and youth at risk of neglect, abuse or criminality. This forum will work

most effectively on a local level but needs to be mirrored at city-wide level and be representative of more senior levels, both within each agency and inter-agency i.e. the Limerick City Children's Services Committee.

- A **common assessment tool must be used to identify those most at risk**, followed by the allocation of a core group of services to support change in the child in the context of their family or vice versa. All interventions need to be appropriate, focussed and integrated as per the multi-agency forum proposed earlier.
- Introduce a **tracking and monitoring system**, as per section 3.1 Early School Leaving, to focus on the progress of under 18's at risk in the Regeneration Areas. This is to prevent young people falling through the net and needs to include transient children/families.
- Introduce a **mechanism for reduction in competition between agencies for current funding**. Agencies are spending a lot of time doing administration to secure annual funding rather than concentrating on their core service. Greater recognition needs to be given to pre-development work, coordination, management and administration costs by funders.

- Give **greater support to and recognition of existing community voluntary clubs/groups**. This will include the building of their capacity to attract more leaders and more participants. It will also include access to training in child protection, behaviour management and other appropriate areas through community based adult education services.
- Ensure that **quality assurance** measures are committed to with regards to out-of-school service provision. **Strong leadership, effective management, flexibility and clarity regarding lines of responsibility** are all necessary to ensure greater integration of services with the end user at the core at all times.

### Family Support

One cannot look at a young person's needs in isolation of their family. A significantly enhanced and integrated **Programme of Family Support** is required in the areas designated for regeneration. This programme must be led by the Health Services Executive and can be delivered by a range of organisations currently operating in the area.

There is a clear need in the Regeneration Areas for high intensity family support work. The nature, extent and intricacy of the work needed to support families in their efforts to be included in society, is often underestimated.

- There needs to be greater support for parents to assist them with their responsibilities for their child's development and upbringing. It is recommended that the **functions and posts within current parent support services are evaluated to clearly identify the type and level of community-based services needed**. Priority needs to be given to building greater capacity in the non-statutory agencies in particular to deliver programmes for crisis and preventative services.

There is a need to address the needs and activities of the **most marginalised children and families** including those involved in serious criminal behaviour. On the one hand, children are not safe to go out and play in front of their house but on the other, children as young as 10yrs old are involved in serious crime.

Agencies have spoken of a notable increase in cases of **post traumatic stress** in children and adults but a lack of services to address this. There is also a lack of acknowledgement of the seriousness of the drugs problem. It is recommended that:

- There should be recognition of the value of **day and residential respite services** for children and their families for crisis and prevention work.



- **Services for young people with serious addiction problems** should be provided, such as a treatment centre and detox units. This should be strategically coordinated (see section 3.3 Health).
- **High quality dedicated youth & children's spaces for leisure activities** such as playgrounds, multi-use games areas, sports & arts spaces are required.

The range of issues covered above is complex in nature and extremely inter-dependent. There needs to be a will for change amongst people on the ground along with changes in policy, process and funding.

It is essential that a greatly enhanced level of targeted family support measures be provided for the Regeneration Areas. It has been reported to us that it can be obvious as early as pre-school, those children that are clearly on a downward spiral. It is at this stage that the intensive targeted support must be provided.

**It is important to recognise that parents are the greatest influence in their child's development. While this section deals with the supports that are necessary there are real responsibilities of parents that go hand in hand with that. Any supports should focus on nurturing a positive relationship between parent, child and the wider family.**

#### Facilities

Whilst some facilities exist, there remains a shortage of good quality community based facilities for all young people. Many of the current resources are directed towards particularly disadvantaged young people, leaving little for others which does cause resentment.

- An **Integrated Children and Youth Resource Centre** is planned for Southhill, which will be opened evenings and weekends, to be accessible and welcoming to all children and youth, with the array of **area-based service workers operating out of offices in the facility**. Provision will need to be put in place for the ownership, maintenance and co-management of facilities by a statutory agency, in conjunction with the other services. Access to mini-buses and drivers at flexible times is equally important.

Other facilities which would be accessible to children, youth and their families are listed in section 4.1 Physical Regeneration.

### 3.3 Health

The Health Services Executive provides a vast array of services in this area and most of these services are excellently delivered. However, there are some that require enhancement and some that require a radical overhaul in light of the unique environment and situation that exists in this area. This section of the Vision Document concentrates on the most pressing of these issues.

Community based groups and state agencies have highlighted the serious nature of health problems that exist in the Regeneration Areas. Today there are people experiencing severe substance addiction, and their families are living with the pain which this brings. There are children, who are malnourished, and whose health, concentration and attendance at school is affected by the lack of a nutritional diet. There are vulnerable families and individuals who need intensive supports to help them survive and rear their children.

It is factors both in and outside of the Health system that cause this. The health and wellbeing of the people is determined by a complex interaction between social and economic factors, the physical environment and individual behaviour. This understanding of health and wellbeing is central to the development of our social regeneration strategy.



### Health Impact Assessment

In order to build a healthy environment and apply standards of excellence to the regeneration, a Health Impact Assessment on the entire Regeneration Project is being undertaken. This means that every idea, plan and project will be examined to assess its impact on health and the health of children. This will be the first Health Impact Assessment to be carried out on a Regeneration Project in the Republic of Ireland.

### Issues and Actions

- The Agency recommends the construction of a new **Primary Health Care Centre** for the Southside of the city in the Regeneration Area to house the **Primary, Continuing and Community Care Team**. This team, currently consisting of a multi-disciplinary panel of health care professionals such as a GP, nurse, physiotherapist, social worker, speech and language therapists and other relevant health care professionals should be further developed to serve the health needs of the community in a coordinated and strategic way. The team should be the first point of contact that the community has with the health and personal social services and should be strongly committed to supporting the participation of communities in addressing health issues.
- **Integration between primary care and specialist services in the community should be strengthened** and there should be much greater integration with other relevant state agencies to ensure services are customer centred rather than service centred.
- There is an urgent need for an **emergency out of hours social work service** for families in crisis.
- The current regional approach i.e. regional drugs task force to the **drug issue** is not sufficient given the scale of drug trafficking, misuse and addiction in Limerick City. The drug trade in Limerick City underpins much of the crime, violence and health issues that exist and so a **much stronger city focus is needed** building on the current work of the Limerick City Drugs Prevention Committee and the HSE West's Sláinte Drug and Alcohol Services. There needs to be a significant increase in resources and activities with regard to supply reduction, prevention, treatment and research. In particular, young people and other vulnerable groups need to be equipped with the skills and supports necessary to make informed choices about their health, personal lives and social development.
- In tandem with this, addicts and their families must be supported to deal with the impact of substance misuse. **A holistic service is needed at community level which would work with addicts to deliver a treatment and rehabilitation programme** which best suits their needs and other supports such as counselling, life

skills, childcare and an out of hours crisis/support point. Also see section 3.2 family support.

- Limerick City has the highest rate nationally of residents with a disability. Baseline information is needed on the numbers of people with disabilities in the regeneration communities. The regeneration process should **support those with sensory, cognitive and mobility impairments** to participate fully in all education, employment and social opportunities.
- The issue of positive mental health is core to a healthy and well community. There is a need for a comprehensive **community focused mental health strategy** to support positive mental health and well being in the regeneration communities. This programme should include suicide prevention work, local mental health advocacy and general positive mental health awareness and promotion campaigns.
- The health recommendations of the **recently produced Inter-Agency Plan for Traveller Services** should be implemented as a matter of urgency.
- There are increasing issues of malnourishment and nutrition related health problems in the regeneration communities, particularly amongst children. There is a need for increased health promotion work with families. This work could include **nutrition awareness, cookery skills and general health promotion**. This should be coupled with a range of community health promotion initiatives such as community cafes, community growing schemes and food co-operatives.
- The Regeneration Agency is aware of the distinct health needs of **older people** and will develop a **strategy for Older People in the Masterplan**.

## 3.4 Welfare

There is very significant dependency on Welfare Payments on these estates including a significant number availing of Disability Allowance.

- There is a need to extract detailed data on the issue of Welfare Payments.
- There is also a very fundamental question **whether or not Welfare Payments from the State should be conditional on reasonable behaviour**, for example:
  - Should people involved in serious criminality and anti-social behaviour towards other citizens still be free to be subsidised by the State?
  - Should parents who do not send their children to school (where there is no obvious obstacle) still be free to be subsidised by the State?

- Should parents who allow their children to cause havoc to other citizens still be free to be subsidised by the State?

### 3.5 Local Authorities

Local Authorities as landlords have a key role to play to ensure social stability in their estates. The three main functions in this context are: -

- The allocation of dwellings
- Enforcement of rental terms and conditions
- Basic upkeep of estates, including control of dogs and horses.

There is a need for the local authorities to put greater resources and attention into these functions. It is essential that significantly stronger strategies and structures are put in place. In fairness to the local authorities in the Limerick area, like local authorities generally around the country, such a course of action has significant financial and human resource implications. In the particular case of Limerick City Council, the size of the estates involved and the scale of the problems means that it mitigates against good housing management without a very serious injection of additional resources. We fully acknowledge and respect the role of the Elected Members of the Local Authorities in this whole process, and we will continue to work very closely with them.



### 3.6 Sport

**Sport could potentially be a more powerful symbol of the regeneration than the physical development of building homes, schools and business.** Limerick already promotes itself with the slogan *Sporting Limerick*. Now there is an opportunity to build on this claim and provide lasting and positive growth in the sports sector for the regeneration communities, and for Limerick as a whole.

The recent sporting celebrations of Limerick making it to the All Ireland Hurling Championship Final in Croke Park last year and Munster winning the Heineken Cup in 2006 are only the tip of the iceberg regarding the activity that constitutes *Sporting Limerick*. The city has iconic structures in the form of the 50,000 seater Gaelic Grounds, the newly refurbished Thomond Park, Jackman Park, the home of Limerick 37, not to mention the nearby University of Limerick with its' world class sports facilities. There are over one hundred clubs in the city area, all contributing significantly to the social fabric of Limerick.





### Towards the Vision for Regeneration and Sport

The FAI, GAA and Munster Rugby are keen to explore the feasibility of regional training sports facilities in the Regeneration Areas which could include a small stadium, natural turf pitches, all weather pitches, indoor training areas, medical facilities and meeting rooms. Some local clubs could be based here alongside sports specific development officers. The quality of some of the sports clubs grounds could also be considered, as well as improving links with schools.

Municipal facilities such as a sports complex, a swimming pool, floodlit all weather pitches and dedicated spaces for boxing and weightlifting are also being considered. As well as providing great sporting opportunities for the young people of these areas, there is also the potential for training and employment.

### Issues and Actions

At present, the Southside Regeneration area has over twenty clubs based in it or serving it. There is a very strong history of sport in the area, especially soccer, with other sports including rugby, Gaelic games, hockey, tennis, boxing, weightlifting and golf. Some of the sports are well developed, while others suffer from:

- Lack of quality facilities
- No youth section/no girls section
- Shortage of volunteers and funding
- Weak governance

### Volunteers

Capacity building needs to be carried out (i.e. via Sports Officers) to:

- Increase awareness of existing clubs
- Increase numbers in clubs
- Increase voluntary activity (parents, coaching, committees)
- Promote self-sufficiency of clubs
- Give due recognition of contribution of volunteers

### Sports Officers

The shortage of locally based Sports and Physical Activity Officers in the area to deal with the promotion of sport and physical activity needs to be dealt with immediately. It will be in their remit to liaise with children, youth, schools, clubs and residents, and to develop and help deliver sports and activity strategies for the community for all age groups. Without these posts, the majority of leisure activity opportunities rely on the current over-burdened volunteers. The Regeneration Areas will be supported to become *Active Communities*.

### Sports Facilities

The Regeneration Agency has had positive consultation with national and regional sporting institutions such as the Munster Rugby, GAA, FAI in the context of regeneration proposals in Limerick. Locally, the Agency has spoken to and listened to a large number



of clubs in the area, as well as the Limerick City Sports Partnership. The Agency has made known its views on the importance of sport in areas of disadvantage and also the potential and opportunities for enhancing sporting participation and sporting facilities in areas that are effectively going to be re-built.

- Whilst terms such as rationalisation and amalgamation have been avoided, the idea of **sharing facilities both within and between the various sporting codes**, is being promoted. In addition the idea of easily accessible facilities to the general public, especially the youth, will be promoted while at the same time not excluding the possibility of having an **'anchor' club(s)** to ensure greater sustainability.
- A particular concept for the Southside that has gained some momentum to date is one around soccer. The concept is the construction of a **modern stadium in Caledonian Park, Hyde Road with related indoor facilities** (including an events centre), and artificial turf pitches, which would effectively become a **regional centre for soccer**, a venue for senior soccer and the new 'home' of soccer in Limerick. The Regeneration Agency will continue to work with the various stakeholders in order to promote this very significant proposal for the Southside.
- Discussions will be continued with with GAA -

**possibility of a Go Games Fun Do Under 10's centre in the southside** - and rugby clubs in the area over the coming months in addition to the consultation on soccer. Other sporting interests in the area will also be engaged with to seek to provide dedicated spaces for minority sports such as boxing, weightlifting and handball which equally have a strong tradition in the area.

- The Regeneration Agency believes that it is essential for the newly regenerated neighbourhood to have a **modern swimming pool, sports hall, aerobics studio and fitness gym**. The good service at St. Enda's Sports Complex is recognised and will be maintained until a new complex is constructed.

### 3.7 Arts and Culture

The cultural wealth of a city is greatly enhanced by the presence of a range of cultural resources. These include not just buildings, but events or individuals that are concerned with the artistic, historic, and traditional, including festivals, languages, diversity, the environment, music, and performing. The list is extensive, and includes the likes of the Irish World Music Centre, the Hunt Museum, Limerick City Gallery of Art, the Belltable Arts Centre, the Daghdha Dance Company and LIT School of Art and Design to name but a few. The challenge in Limerick, where a healthy

'soft' infrastructure exists for arts and culture, is to harness the creativity already obvious in individuals and communities.

**Issues and Actions**

The cultural infrastructural needs in Limerick are;

- An **accessible music resource space** - band rehearsal, equipment bank, recording facilities - to support young and emerging groups.
- A **'Black box' space** to accept varied presentation formats.
- A dedicated **rehearsal space** for rehearsing and supporting the development and production of new work in theatre.
- A dedicated **resource space** for poets and writers.
- A **cinema** space, either commercial or cultural, in the city boundary.
- A purpose-built **outdoor facility or space** for presenting / staging music, drama, dance, film, street theatre or circus.
- A **library facility** on the Southside of the city.

The Regeneration Agency will ensure that an **Arts and Culture Strategy** is developed for the Regeneration Areas, building on the Limerick Integrated Arts Strategy. Consideration will be given to the *Percent for Arts* initiatives and outreach work by existing arts and cultural groups into the Regeneration Areas.

- Residents who participate in training and employment programmes will have access to qualifications on the **National Qualifications Framework**.
- An **integrated set of labour market services** will be provided, supporting the learner from the initial engagement, through guidance, career planning and training to job placement.
- **Easily accessible, flexible quality services** are available to residents to enable them to take up employment opportunities, in particular related to the regeneration and the broader Limerick City economy.
- **Various barriers to employment will be addressed**, for example educational deficits, ease of access and lack of engagement with state agencies.



**3.8 Jobs**

A recently formed **Regeneration Employment Forum**, consisting of representatives from FÁS, the Local Employment Service, the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Social and Family Affairs, is chaired by the Chief Executive of this agency, and **was established to support the Regeneration Agencies in developing and delivering training and employment programmes to tackle the high rates of unemployment**. This ongoing forum will endeavour to ensure that:

**The Regeneration Agency will strongly promote:**

- That residents of the regeneration **communities** will, to the greatest extent possible, **benefit directly from the employment opportunities** created by regeneration itself.
- **Training programmes and support services** that will enable residents to access employment opportunities.

In order to facilitate this:

- Disincentives to employment will be examined and removed, and supports put in place, where necessary.
- Services will be provided that are tailored to the needs of the individual, i.e. individual learning, accessible and flexible services.

**The 16-25 year olds not currently in any training or educational programme are a priority.** Despite making up over 50% of registered FÁS/LES clients, this group has not taken up the training and employment options available to them. Provision of special initiatives to engage with these individuals in a proactive way is needed.

In order to facilitate new training initiatives, it has been agreed that **a process of identifying early school leavers and unemployed men and women in the Regeneration Areas should begin**, with an initial focus on identifying:

- The reasons why they are not employed.
- The barriers they face.
- Their emerging needs.

**People most distant from employment need special support and guidance services to move from unemployment to work.** Supported employment programmes will be an integral part of training interventions, such as:

- Mentoring.
- Advocacy.
- Intensive guidance.

**The engagement with employers is critical to success**, and their participation in the provision of work based learning is an important requirement. FÁS services to business personnel can help develop positive responses from key employers with a view to providing employment. The identification of skill sets from particular employers and the provision of targeted training to potential employees is another important step. The use of existing FÁS services should be fully utilised, i.e. Jobs Clubs.

**A fundamental rethink of adult training and educational services provision is required.** It is crucial that an examination of current provision, approaches and facilities is undertaken to inform the future development of labour market services to the regeneration communities.

**Training for caretaking, security and clerical staff for schools** needs to be provided for the residents of the community. These services are essential to schools, and it is a priority that the posts are filled by fully qualified residents who have previously or are currently involved, i.e. Job Initiative participants.

### Construction Employment

The construction of new neighbourhoods will result in a considerable amount of employment opportunities. **It is of huge importance that a high number of the opportunities are for the existing residents of Southill/Ballinacurra Weston and surrounding areas.** As a result, the Southside Regeneration Agency will insert local employment clauses into each contract that is

awarded for the redevelopment, including (but not exclusively) construction and security. This will include the awarding of apprenticeships to local people.

The Agencies will engage with the 3<sup>rd</sup> level institutions in the city to establish a pre-apprentice training course for the existing residents of the estates. Other courses such as Safe Pass Courses will be organised through FAS.

### Other Opportunities

Consideration will be given to the types of facilities that will be required by the workers during the construction period of the development to ensure that such enterprises are provided in the area, such as a cafe or delicatessen. **A community based enterprise for such a provision will be encouraged and supported.**

### Local employment

The concept for the redevelopment is that **there will be new neighbourhoods with all the facilities and amenities that would be expected anywhere else in the country.** As a result, there will be a considerable amount of employment opportunities in businesses such as offices, shops, laundrette, restaurants and cafes. A training audit will be carried out to ensure that people are suitably trained to take up the opportunities that will arise into the future. The necessary training and courses will be facilitated by the Agency through existing training institutes, such as the Adult Education Courses, FAS, FETAC, CERT or Fáilte Ireland.

### Community work partnerships

The Agency will work with Local Community Enterprise Organisations to encourage and facilitate community based enterprise. This may include the provision of units with subsidised rents for a fixed period to allow the business to establish itself in the market. **Enterprises around food and food partnerships will be encouraged**, including meals on wheels, breakfast clubs, healthy eating and farmers markets. Health and the provision of healthy living is one of the components of the regeneration, and the provision of such enterprise will encourage and promote healthy eating, which will improve the health and quality of life of the residents.

**The Agency will engage with the significant and various stakeholders in the whole area of employment**, for example the Department Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Enterprise Ireland, IDA and Shannon Development, on specific and targeted initiatives for the area.

### Infrastructure

The Regeneration Agency strongly recommends that FAS would construct a new Training Centre in the Southside Regeneration Area, which would effectively address the major challenge of providing employment to residents in the area.

# 4.0

## Physical and Economic Regeneration



Our Community, **Our Vision**  
Our Future



LIMERICK SOUTHSIDE  
**REGENERATION**  
AGENCY

## 4.0 Physical and Economic Regeneration



The physical environment is the pivot of regeneration. It impacts on every demographic, from children and their play spaces to older people and their retirement complexes, and on every aspect of living from health to mobility, to the growth of social networks and social capital. **The physical environment is the facilitator of regeneration.** It creates the setting within which economic and social change can take root and transform people's lives.

It is important that the **facilities and amenities are sustainable into the future**, and as a result the location of the facilities will form an important task for the Masterplan Team. The Facilities will be located to ensure that they are of benefit and convenient for more than one community.

The Regeneration Areas of Southill and Ballinacurra Weston are within a 15 minute walk of the heart of the city and its amenities such as shopping, restaurants and public houses. The train and bus stations are also only 15 minutes from the area with their transport links to the mid western region and beyond.

In addition to the Housing Estates outlined in Section 1.0 of this document the redevelopment will include:

- The Galvone Industrial Estate
- The LEDP Site
- The site of the Roxboro Shopping Centre
- St Enda's School
- Galvone Primary School
- Southill Junior School
- Southill Church
- Roxboro Garda Station
- The Traveller accommodation at Clonlong
- All lands owned by the state in the area and all lands reaching from Southill up to the N7 dual carriageway and interchange.
- Rathbane Golf Club
- Our Lady of Lourdes School
- Our Lady of Lourdes Community Centre
- Our Lady of Lourdes Church
- Hogan Park
- Barry's Field
- Toppin's Field

## 4.1 Physical Regeneration

The physical environment is the facilitator of regeneration. It creates the setting within which economic and social change can take root and transform people's lives.

A number of new facilities will be provided throughout the area in conjunction with the new housing. Among these facilities will be:

- **Play areas** for different age groups in various locations throughout the estates, to allow for easy supervision of children while using the play areas. Small play areas for each cluster of housing.
- The new **community/sports building** in O'Malley Park, while greatly welcomed, will need to be evaluated and enlarged, if necessary. The centre should be considered as a community building that would incorporate **a library**. The facilities that would be required to be provided by such a community building are:
  - Multi-purpose space for such activities as parent and child activities, senior citizen groups and community based training courses.
  - Crèche
  - Office space for community based groups, residents associations, estate workers, centre management and local authority area office.
  - Community Exhibition space with refreshment area
  - Arts and Culture space, including a performance space

The facility should also cater for existing services such as:

- Family Resources Centre
- Community Development Project
- Barnardos
- After Schools Project



- **New Garda Station** in the heart of the estates, this station would replace the existing Roxboro Road Garda Station.
- **Crèche Facilities** for both commercial and community use.
- **Integrated Children and Youth Centre** will be located at the outskirts of the estates to attract children and youth from all communities. The building should be state-of-the-art, with various multi-purpose spaces, Youth Café and office for Development Workers overhead. The centre should be open hours that will suit young people (as outlined in Section 3.2 Children, Youth and Family Support).

**In addition, other developments will be considered as part of the Regeneration:**

- **Shops**, including the redevelopment of the Roxboro Shopping Centre to include extra development in a more village-type setting, with own door premises on to the street front, underground car parking and restaurants/ cafes.



- **Adult Education Centre**  
The Regeneration Agency is keen to promote the concept of a college for Further and Adult Education in the area. This facility would broaden the delivery of education to adults in the city, attract students from all areas, and encourage investment and business into the area. This facility should be state of the art and fully resourced.
- A new **Primary Health Care Centre**, with a Primary Health Care Team for the Regeneration Area.
- **Hotel and Conference Centre** attached to Rathbane golf course.

The use of a golf course so close to O'Malley Park and the city centre will be considered. This can be done by providing a hotel and full conference centre that could enter into a partnership with the golf course that is visible from the dual carriageway. The hotel and conference centre should be a landmark building, and announce to the visitor that they are entering Limerick.

- **Sports Facility as outlined in Section 3.6**  
There will be a sports facility provided that will incorporate a number of uses, including:
  - Swimming pool and sports centre
  - Playing pitches and Astroturf surfaces for clubs and community
  - Specialist facilities i.e. handball, boxing and weightlifting
  - Facility for casual sports
  - Emphasis on Soccer
- **Rathbane Golf Course** will be encouraged to provide a driving range for use by the wider community on a commercial basis.
- The site of the existing **Limerick Enterprise Development Park (LEDP)** should be redeveloped to provide state of the art offices with a landmark building overlooking the roundabout. Government offices should be targeted through decentralisation as anchor tenants along with the present users of the LEDP. There should be serviced offices as well as un-serviced offices provided in the complex.
- The existing **Galvone industrial estate** should be redeveloped into a modern Business Park that can cater for all types of business and enterprises. With new road structures and entrances.
- **Realignment of the current road layout within the area.** The road network should assist in providing a number of new neighbourhoods that are interlinked with plazas/squares and pedestrian ways as opposed to through routes. Alternative and new entrances to the various neighbourhoods should be examined.
- The current proposed alignment of the **Rosbrien Interchange (N7)** will have a detrimental effect on access to the Southill Area and will reduce the attractiveness for new investment. The Agency will strive along the other relevant authorities to implement a more appropriate approach.
- The sinking of the **Roxboro Roundabout** to allow for a plaza that will link all neighbourhoods and facilities will be examined.

- The existing **church and schools** will be examined to ascertain the feasibility of the provision of new buildings.

In addition the provision of a **Youth and Community Centre in Ballinacurra/Weston and a Health Centre** along with play grounds and adhoc play space will be considered.

## 4.2 Economic Regeneration

The Agency recognises that the economic development of the region as a whole needs to be addressed, and as a result supports the recommendations of the **Atlantic Way Group**, which is a movement comprised of a number of committed people, representative of key private and public sector bodies, which seeks to maximise the development potential of the West.

The **re-building/refurbishment of the estates and the development strategically of adjacent lands will bring a level of Economic Regeneration** to the area and will also act as a serious catalyst for Economic Redevelopment in the region.

In the same context, if we are to achieve real and long term sustainability for the new and transformed suburb of Southill and Ballinacurra Weston, then **employment and enterprise opportunities need to be maximised** for the region.

For this reason we will pursue a **strong link** with the 'Atlantic Way' initiative, which has been campaigning actively and showing excellent leadership for the benefit of the Mid-west to Galway Region.

It is essential to aim big and to think big, not just for the areas about to undergo regeneration, but also Limerick City and County and the Region, generally. We will ensure that our Masterplans will strongly connect with plans for the city centre and the region. The areas of Southill and Ballinacurra Weston can no longer remain 'isolated' and alienated. **A key action in this is transport, and it is essential that existing rail lines are enhanced and extended and that light rail (trams) are seriously considered for city to suburb travel needs. We look forward to consulting with Iarnoid Eireann and Bus Eireann in this regard**

Within the estates a number of steps are required to ensure the long-term sustainability of the areas by creating employment opportunities that will enhance the economic outlook of the residents and the businesses that locate in the area.



These steps will include:

- Local employment clauses in all contracts awarded under the regeneration.
- Ensuring the awarding of Apprenticeships through the local employment clause in contracts.
- Engaging with the third level institutions to provide pre-apprenticeship courses.
- Facilitation of community based enterprises such as the provision of low rent business units.
- Engaging with IBEC to identify the needs of businesses to encourage location within the business park.
- Active pursuit of anchor employers in the area.
- Identification and support of local employment in the sports and leisure facilities being provided as part of the regeneration.
- Examination of the potential for community based employment opportunities in the estate management into the future.

The Agency believes that to achieve the type of Economic Regeneration required it is essential that there is a sufficiently attractive environment for the Private Sector to invest strongly in the area. Therefore **we recommend that the Government would introduce suitable Tax Incentives for particular zones within the Regeneration Masterplan Area.**

### 4.3 Environmental Sustainability

The aim of the regeneration is to create communities where the existing and new residents will want to live and work. These communities will include amenities such as accommodation, healthcare and education, offering a high quality of life and a positive environmental impact.



- Delivering **practical solutions** to sustainability issues, such as, energy and water consumption and security provision.
- Drawing up, in conjunction with the Agency, a **Waste Management Plan** for the estate.
- Addressing general **climate change issues**.

To meet this aim, the team involved in the completion of the Masterplan for the regeneration **must work to establish and meet common objectives** such as local employment and skill training, security and healthy lifestyles and a sustainable environment.

The Agency will engage consultants who will oversee the Masterplan completion, and will act in an **advisory capacity** to the Agency to ensure that these aims are met. It will be the role of the consultants to ensure that **sustainability is integrated into the projects objectives** by providing expert advice to the Agency to ensure that best practice in sustainability is applied to all aspects of the Masterplan by:

- Determining with the Agency and residents what **sustainability issues** need to be addressed in the master plan.
- **Developing sustainability.**
- Providing a means to **coordinate and monitor** progress towards the objectives.

# 5.0

## Public Services



Our Community, **Our Vision**  
Our Future



LIMERICK SOUTHSIDE  
**REGENERATION**  
AGENCY

## 5.0 Public Services

It has been quite refreshing to see the strong level of support, co-operation, assistance and courtesy from a range of state service providers in the designated areas, and this augers well for the integrated and coordinated approach from the state that is essential to achieve sustainable regeneration.

### 5.1 The System

**Without doubt it is clear that the system (i.e. the system of delivering state services) has failed the communities of Southill and Ballinacurra Weston.** This has happened despite strong commitment and hard work from public servants generally, and despite the very significant support, funding and other resources from Government down through the years.

Generally Public Services in the country are geared towards citizens who come and seek the service, and in Ireland these services are very good. However, in situations of major disadvantage, many people simply will not avail of key state services so a different and more intensive approach is required.

For example, when children opt out of school and where their parents (who also may have opted out of school early) will not encourage them to return, what can the state do?

Because the system has been failing communities like these for a long number of years, it will require a radical, concentrated and different approach over an extended period in order to achieve the required transformation.

### 5.2 Delivery and Management

**The delivery of state services must be brought closer to these communities.** There must be greater accountability (i.e. who is in charge), and there must be greater communication and clear lines of responsibility between senior management and the frontline. The community should have occasional (at least) access to senior management, where necessary.

It is essential that key frontline services are measured for performance and that somebody at a senior level is responsible for that performance.

The Data Protection Act is a very important and necessary piece of legislation in Ireland. However, some public servants appear to take a very rigid interpretation of this legislation. **We do not think that the legislation was ever intended to act as a barrier to the provision of much needed and urgent services to very vulnerable people.**

It is essential that the key state service providers urgently develop a clear and workable policy on data protection in order for information to be shared for the betterment of very vulnerable citizens. It should be possible to do this without the necessity of changing the legislation. However, if it is not possible then the legislation should be reviewed.

Health, Safety and Welfare are other vital pieces of legislation in this country, but again some public servants attempt to 'hide' behind this regulation. For example, there is some evidence of services being withdrawn from certain estates because of the safety risk to staff (i.e. in the context of serious criminality).

While safety has to be a priority issue for employers, it does not help the bad overall situation if key services or enforcement measures are not being implemented. Again it must be possible (in fact essential) that a reasonable balance is achieved.

While we welcome and appreciate the strong support and cooperation received from all state agencies, the above issues have contributed negatively to the problems, and continue to do so.

The Fitzgerald Report and the Government Establishment Orders for the two Regeneration Agencies highlight the importance of coordinating state services, and the Agencies have a clear role in this process.

The Agencies will not 'take over' any of the normal day to day functions of any state agency. We will not become a funder of normal day-to-day state services.

We are not seeking to undermine or criticise any service.

The Agencies will, however, ask relevant questions, make relevant recommendations and challenge, where necessary.

We will assist, support and act as a lobbying influence for state agencies that are striving for positive change and improvement.

**The Agency model does not dispense with, or bypass, local government.** On the contrary, it provides a necessary support to local government on a temporary basis, and allows local authorities more space to exercise their ongoing wider brief.

The Agencies will set up and facilitate the following working groups to further the aim of integration and coordination of state services in the regeneration communities.

- High level state services co-ordination/integration i.e. local authority, Gardaí, Education, Health, FAS, VEC, Welfare
- Education i.e. key education providers
- Health i.e. Children, Family Support, Social Services
- Employment i.e. FAS, Welfare, Education
- Community Safety i.e. Gardaí, Local Authority, Health

**We will ensure that there will be connectivity between these working groups and local community structures, Policing Forums, public representatives and other existing forums operating in the area.**

### 5.3 Local Development Structures

There are very elaborate local development structures operating in the area. They consist of a large number of different organisations, mainly related to issues of social inclusion.

In the past there has been some criticism of such structures throughout the country, arising out of the large number of bodies involved, and a perceived lack of accountability.

However, our experience so far in Limerick City would be of the very positive and very important work that these organisations carry out. They also represent a very strong catalyst for real community engagement and participation, and certainly are no less accountable than many of the state agencies in the area.

We see real potential for the development of community empowerment by the Agency working closely and strategically with organisations such as the Paul Partnership and the Southill House Campus.

With particular reference to the R.A.P.I.D. Programme, its boundaries of operation are very similar to the boundaries of the Regeneration Agencies. We would recommend that serious consideration be given to the concept of integrating the work of R.A.P.I.D. fully into the remit of the Regeneration Agencies.

The Regeneration Agency is looking forward to working in partnership with all the local development structures on the Southside of Limerick, **towards a shared aim of transforming this suburb into one of the best, most vibrant and sustainable suburbs in the country.**



## 6.0 Conclusion and Next Steps

In providing a summary of this essential vision for the future the following key points must be kept at the top of the regeneration agenda:-

- For the state, education has to be the prime solution in the achievement of sustainable social inclusion.
- For the community, safety is their prime concern.
- The category of people requiring the greatest intervention is children.
- The main actions required are strong and targeted enforcement and strong and targeted support.
- The need for state agencies to implement reform within their own organisations in order to respond properly to the challenges before them in Limerick in the short, medium and long term.

**Following the official launch of this vision document we will initiate a further process of intensive consultation.**

The Master Planning consultants will commence their work in late February with the aim of finalising a social, physical and economic Masterplan by the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2008 (which will put the detail to the vision proposals).

All going well we hope to begin construction of new homes in early 2009.

This document contains no detail on funding required to implement the comprehensive vision for the Southill and Ballinacurra Weston areas.

The Masterplanning, which begins in February (through consultants), will provide the full financial/costing implications of all proposals.

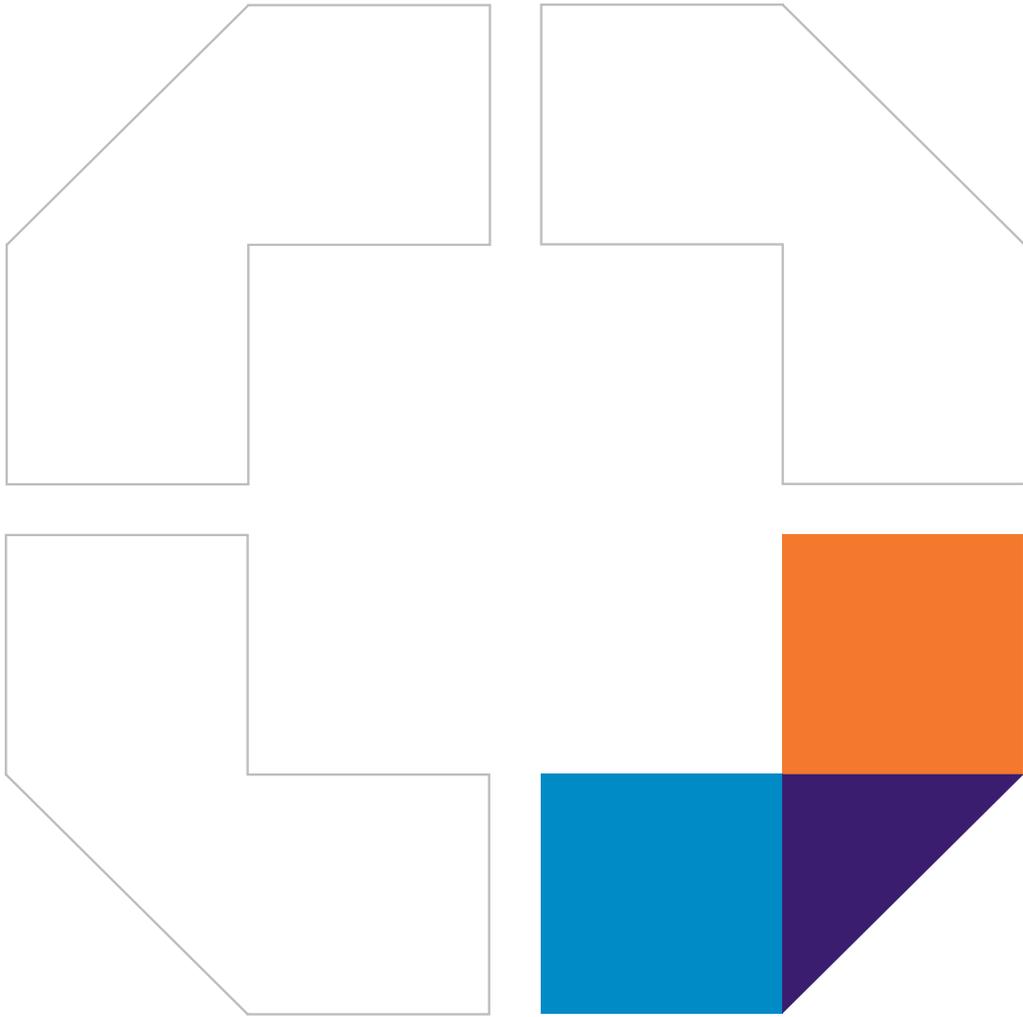
While there is no doubt that considerable additional resources both capital and revenue will be required there will be considerable opportunities to tap into private sector finance and Public Private Partnership arrangements, which the Regeneration Agencies will strive to maximise. It is a benefit also that there is significant land owned by the State within the Regeneration Areas, which will be utilised fully for the development of a comprehensive social, physical and economic regeneration.

It must be borne in mind the sheer enormity of resources that have and continue to be put into these areas of major disadvantage and the sheer enormity of the human and economic cost of criminality, prison, murder, anti-social behaviour, property damage etc. which has prevailed in the area.

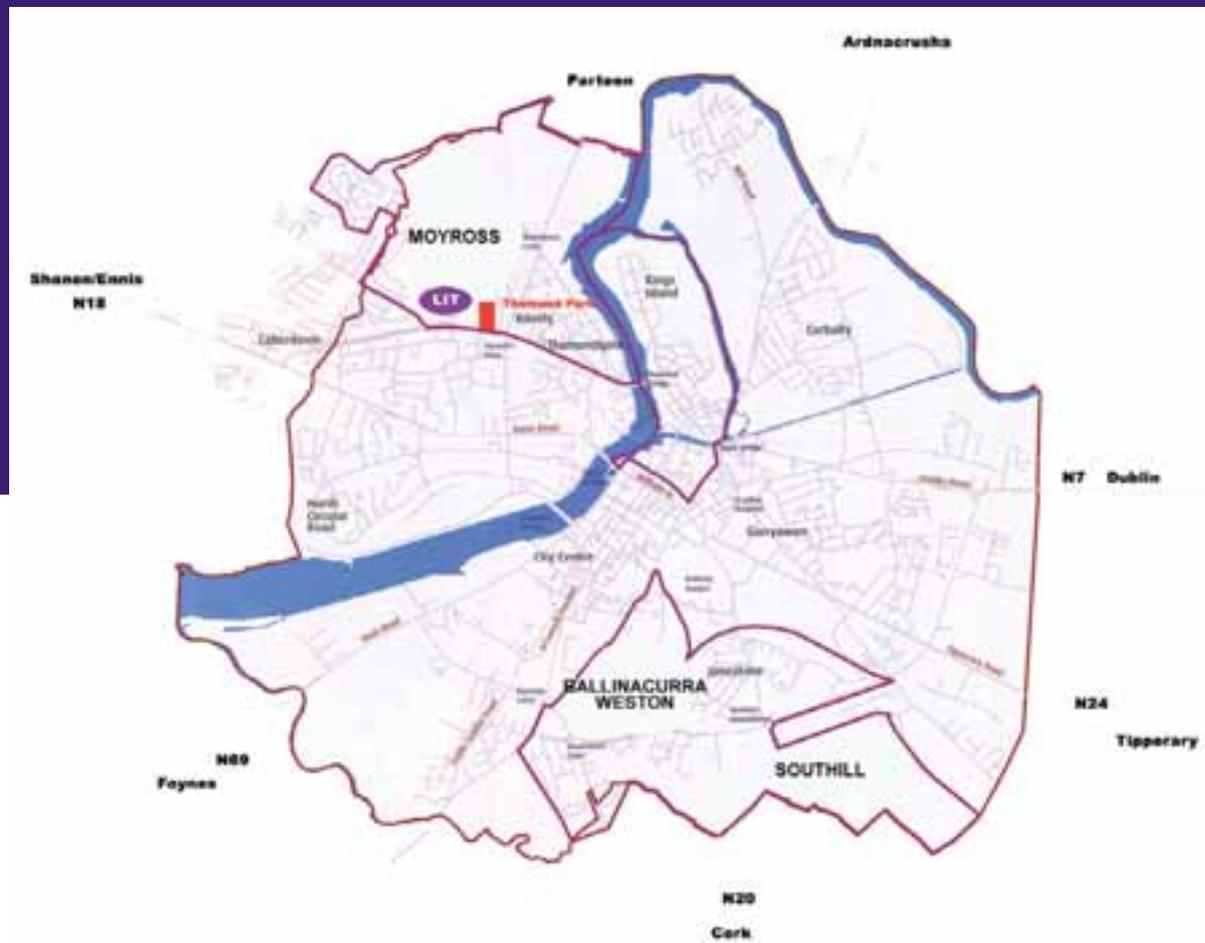
It also has to be taken into account that some of the improvements outlined in this vision document could be achieved by 'doing business differently' and by making better use of existing resources.

An important issue is the lack of detailed data on a range of matters pertaining to the Regeneration Areas. We will be doing a lot of work in compiling all relevant data over the coming months.

Some of the proposals outlined in this vision document are fully within the remit of the Agency, others are and will be the responsibility of a range of other Agencies. Therefore it is vital that we strive strongly for integration, 'joined up' strategies and planning and that we strive to change the system and 'break the mould,' where necessary.



“The illustrations in this document have been provided through Art Projects with Pupils from Galvone National School, Southhill and Our Lady of Lourdes National School, Ballinacurra.”



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