

TIPPERARY SOUTH RIDING COUNTY DEVELOPMENT BOARD

SEVENTH MEETING REPORT

Meeting held: June 11, 2001
Members present: 21 (75% attendance)
Chair: Cllr. Tom Wood.

SUMMARY

Tipperary (South Riding) County Development Board reviewed the reports and strategic themes emerging from its three Working Groups at the June 2001 Board meeting.

An amended vision statement was developed: *South Tipperary will have an inclusive economy and an excellent quality of life. It will be a place where all families and individuals can prosper. South Tipperary will balance the demands of a vibrant economy with the demands of a healthy and sustainable environment.*

On the eight strategic themes emerging from Working Groups reports, the following is recommended:

- ✓ Work needs to be carried out with Tipperary (North Riding) County Development Board and with the Cultural Working Group to define the essence of 'Tipperaryness'.
- ✓ Consult with Tipperary (North Riding) County Development Board on a countywide approach to the professional development of culture.
- ✓ The matchmaking process to be pursued by the Economic Working Group
- ✓ To link the three themes of facility provision, information and outreach services and reduction of access times into one strategic theme.
- ✓ To request other relevant stakeholders to prepare statements on implementing the 'holistic' social service delivery strategic theme based on the South Eastern Health Board template.
- ✓ To seek advice and guidance from the National Pillar of the Voluntary and Community Sector and other CDBS to find a mechanism that will trigger new voluntary endeavor.

Research and development work will also be applied to three additional strategic themes:

- ✓ Spatial theme on achieving balanced development in the County (including regional and national context)
- ✓ Theme on children and family
- ✓ Theme on the environment

Decision: It was agreed to invite Tipperary Institute to nominate a representative onto Tipperary (South Riding) County Development Board.

1. Integrated review of the County and Vision for the future of South Tipperary

Tipperary (South Riding) County Development Board reviewed the reports of its three main Working Groups at its June 2001 meeting.

1.1 Toss Hayes presented a summary of the Economic Working Group Report.

Job creation needs to remain a priority. If people have jobs, almost everything else falls into place. The Economic Working Group's perspective on the value that a County Economic Strategy needs to add to the economic situation of South Tipperary is:

- Build on the Tipperary Brand name to promote quality goods and services from the County. There is a need to build a strong association between quality and the Tipperary name.
- Shorten access times within the County and from the county to the main cities, ports and airports in Ireland. Access time to airports, which are substantive international hubs, is a critical indicator of future competitiveness and the National Spatial Strategy may well recommend one of the existing three airports south of Dublin for development as an international hub but it may also consider other options.
- Take on the role of 'matchmaker' by facilitating better matches: between the skills base/qualifications of the population and available jobs; between education supply and industry development; within and between sectors in the economy to optimise value added potential; between entrepreneurs (especially farmers and small retailers) and new opportunity areas; between micro businesses and external markets; between growing Clonmel as a nationally significant economic location and balanced development in the county; etc. All of these matches have the potential to strengthen the economic base of the county. One critical challenge is to get consensus on the role each town can play in achieving sustainable economic development in the county.

1.2 Oliver Clancy presented a summary of the Social Inclusion Working Group Report.

The Social Inclusion Working Group had set up eight segment groups who identified 40 issues of concern and 39 desired outcomes. The Working Group when reviewing the work of segment groups identified six common strategies and two possible other strategies. These strategies have been condensed into the following summary.

The purpose of the County Social Strategy is to add value to the relationship between the citizen and service provision (public, local development, community, etc). Four critical areas of intervention that can make a difference to the social situation of the county have been identified in the work of the Social Inclusion Working Group and its Segment Sub-Groups to date:

- Integrated, holistic, humane and targeted approach to service provision for the socially excluded
- Pro-active strategies for the provision of information, consultation, brokerage, measurement of performance, etc., among service providers so that the services delivered are based on a deeper knowledge and a better understanding of the needs of clients
- Focused support for the evolution of the community and voluntary sector in targeting social inclusion
- Role of ‘matchmaker’ by facilitating better matches: between the skills base/qualifications of the population and available jobs.

A sample of the **critical issues** which arose in the segment groups are as follows.

Health: Provide the elderly with choices of independent living. The outcomes required will include the provision of outreach services and ensuring existing support services can be sustained.

Education and Youth: Lack of community initiatives for youth that provide developmental and positive choices; the need for life long learning to be copper fastened and firmly established; an interagency approach to preventing early school leaving.

Adequate Family Income: Target resources based on accurate information on the needs of individuals, families and communities; need for more positive taxation and social welfare supports to encourage the long term unemployed into the work place.

Childcare: Enhancing the qualifications of those employed the sector and increasing the supply of affordable, quality and disabled-accessible childcare facilities.

Unemployment: Structured development paths needed to raise the skills levels and link with employment opportunities; focus resources on Tipperary Town and Carrick on Suir and other pockets of disadvantage; also focus resources on the indigenous sector to create jobs because this sector is more likely to deliver results that utilises available labour.

Housing: Increase provision of affordable housing; address the major challenge of how to deliver the agreed policy on traveller accommodation.

Transport: Need to provide accessible and affordable transport; need to address issues of labour mobility sustainability and access to services.

Community Development: So many services being communitised at a time of decline of volunteers and reductions on available labour for community employment schemes; an outcome is needed that is beneficial to the community not just to the public sector.

1.3 John Quinn presented a summary of the **Cultural Working Group** Report.

The Cultural Working Group's perspective on the value that a County Cultural Strategy needs to add to the cultural situation of South Tipperary is:

- Professional backing at county level for culture
- An agreed facility development strategy (for a generation) which is attracting public resources
- An emphasis on enabling volunteers get real support and more recognition (for the time spent) especially qualifications and skills
- More emphasis on participation and a strategy of outreach in the resourcing of the cultural sector.

1.4 Ned Gleeson crosschecked the **Working Group reports** from national, regional, county and sub-county **spatial perspectives**.

The National Spatial Strategy is central to Government Policy on achieving balanced regional development. The main issues to be addressed:

- Dublin as a European Capital Region continuing to hold its place while at the same time ensuring that Dublin's growth is not at the expense of other regions.
- The interdependence between urban and rural areas and the spatial implications of the continuing structural changes in agriculture.
- The land use implications of building an additional 500,000 housing units in the next decade
- Strengths and weaknesses of each region in Ireland
- Criteria for defining new regional gateways
- Access to knowledge, research and infrastructure
- Role of technology in overcoming problems of remoteness
- Balance between urban sprawl and urban regeneration.

The implications of the National Spatial Strategy for South Tipperary include:

- There is a clear need for balanced growth within the county but that will not be easy to achieve given the continuing decline in agricultural employment and a focus on regional and (perhaps) sub regional gateways.
- The development of a gateway concept within the urban structure as a means of maximizing national performance may promote Waterford City. But it raises questions on the role of county towns such as Clonmel and the other towns in South Tipperary. Clonmel has advantages for consideration as a gateway town (good inland location adjacent to national crossroads, large industry base, third level college, etc).

- Access to an airport that is an international hub is an important issue for the county. Can Waterford (now the South East) Regional Airport develop the level of service required by businesses?
- The lack of regional cohesion in the South East is contributing to its relative underperformance in national terms. Counties and towns are perceived to be acting in competition with each other. But there may alternatives. One previous suggestion is that Carlow Town, Kilkenny City and Clonmel be linked more closely together.
- The County optimizes the resources in the National Development Plan with regard to roads, housing, broadband technology, services such as water and wastewater and social exclusion.

The County Strategy will also be important in the context of:

- Building the social infrastructure with an alignment (and transparency) of resources towards the common good (especially sustaining rural areas)
- Defining and promoting the culture of the county
- Formal certification of life-long learning.

1.5 Michael Hanly crosschecked the Working Group reports from the perspective of the work carried out by the Board in developing its **vision for the future**.

The Working Group reports are broadly in line with the draft vision formulated by the Board at its February 2001 meeting. But the cultural strategy offers considerable scope in addressing social exclusion of both individuals and minorities and there is a need to create coherent links between the County Social Strategy and the County Cultural Strategy.

1.6 Board members responded to the presentations. The main issues arising included:

The decisions made in the National Spatial Strategy will have a direct impact on the County Strategy in South Tipperary. South Tipperary has a major strength from a national perspective because of the crisscross of national primary roads and rail lines in the county. These need to be communicated but only in the context of a unified campaign with neighbouring counties.

In developing a County Strategy, cognisance must be taken of regional issues. Given that the South East Region is already perceived to be weak because of a lack of regional cohesion, it is important that regional conflicts are avoided in the County Strategy. But the existing regional structure does need to be enhanced. Consideration should be given to the development of a tripartite inland town strategy based on Carlow, Kilkenny and Clonmel.

Another spatial consideration is the location of Clonmel in South Tipperary. Strategies which link Clonmel with Kilkenny/Carlow or with Waterford City should impact positively on Carrick on Suir and Fethard. A sub-county tripartite strategy is also required for Tipperary Town, Cashel and Cahir, given their proximity to main road and rail crossovers. All three towns are designated heritage towns.

The more rural locations in the County may need special measures. The economic outlook is poor with a predicted continuing decline of 2% annually in the labour force in these areas. There is a need to cross check the emerging County Strategy with the aspirations in the White Paper for Rural Development.

There is a potential conflict between economic and social considerations. The success of the economy is putting considerable pressure to increase the labour force. There are other push factors that impact on individual choices. Financial considerations often force both partners in a family to work outside the home. This is reflected in the increasing participation of women in the labour force, which in turn is creating a demand for alternative affordable child care services. (Many of the extended family/neighbours who previously looked after children are also transferring to the workplace). Many families may well want a choice other than for both partners to work and their children in childcare (including at school). What would be the choice of their children in this instance? Can a County Strategy add value to the social situation of these families and children. Can child care not be provided where parents work? If the family situation becomes dysfunctional, there is a major threat of excessive future demand on psychological services, counseling, etc. There may be a need to utilize the opportunity of the National Children's Strategy to include a theme in the County Strategy that is children/family focused.

There is also a push factor on those children not succeeding in school to enter the work force, mainly to low paying jobs. At a time of plenty, this is an unwise choice. The most common feature in research carried out on those living in poverty and social exclusion is that of early school leaving. But can the County Social Strategy add any value given the absence of a local structure from the Department of Education that can encompass both primary and second level education at a county level. As the Department of Education is organised nationally, perhaps the negotiation on the critical issue of addressing early school leaving has to be addressed by the 34 CDBs working in tandem or alternatively through an intermediary partner such as PLANET or the Association of Community Groups.

The match between available labour and available opportunities could be enhanced with foundation courses such as the 'Traineeship' programme resourced via the National Development Plan.

Co-ordination is the key to cultural services. Two triangular links are evident in terms of cultural service provision – Tipperary Town-Cashel-Cahir and Clonmel-Fethard-Carrick on Suir.

There is a need to promote the region for industry and tourism. There are 400,000 people in the South East, 50% of whom are under 32 and three third level colleges. The region needs an airport. There is also a need to get the region connected into the National backbone for broadband communications.

The Environment needs to feature as a theme in the County Strategy. The impact of economic, social and cultural strategies on the environment must be considered before the strategies are formally endorsed by this Board. Pro-environment solutions to addressing issues also need to be included (eg. production of local foods organically, low energy usage in determining approaches to house design and build, eco-villages in village development schemes, small scale enterprise development, etc)

1.7 Outcomes of the discussion

Amendments were recommended to the draft vision –

South Tipperary will have an inclusive economy and an excellent quality of life. It will be a place where all families and individuals can prosper. South Tipperary will balance the demands of a vibrant economy with the demands of a healthy and sustainable environment.

Three additional strategic themes (to those being reviewed later) are suggested:
Spatial theme on achieving balanced development in the County (linked with the National Spatial Strategy and regional spatial strategy)
Theme on children and family
Theme on the environment

Tipperary Institute has made a significant contribution to the CDB Working Groups and has an important role to play in the delivery of the County Strategy in South Tipperary.

Decision: On the proposal of Cllr Brendan Griffin, seconded by Cllr Susan Meagher, it was agreed to invite Tipperary Institute to nominate a representative onto Tipperary (South Riding) County Development Board.

The nominee of Tipperary Institute will be formally co-opted onto the Board at the next meeting.

2. Achieving the Goals of the County Strategy

Tipperary (South Riding) County Development Board reviewed eight goals (strategic themes) which had emerged from the Working Group Reports.

2.1 Potential of the Tipperary ‘Brand’

Concern was expressed as to whether the goal of developing a ‘Tipperary’ Brand was viable. It may be outside the scope of the County Development Board to determine if the ‘brand’ is viable – there a number of products already using the Tipperary name. There was consensus that the name Tipperary is well known and that this name could form the basis of ‘brand’ development. The key to the success of the ‘Waterford Brand’ was professional marketing and an agreement among a number of agencies and interests to pool resources which were invested in marketing. Brand development is important. But what is the target audience? Is it selling Tipperary produce to Tipperary people?

However, it was felt that it may be more appropriate for the County Development Board to look at cultural aspects prior to an economic strategy based on the ‘Tipperary name’. The uniqueness of Tipperary as a county and Tipperary people needs to be captured and defined more precisely for promotion internally in the county and also domestically in Ireland, prior to targeting international target markets.

Work needs to be carried out with Tipperary (North Riding) County Development Board and with the Cultural Working Group to define the essence of ‘Tipperaryness’. Some features that could be considered are:

- South Tipperary – the built heritage county.
- The equine heritage is another strength.
- Tipperary is also associated with hurling – Thurles being the home of hurling.
- The Tipperary name in the song is associated with Tipperary Town. Perhaps it needs to be associated with County Tipperary.

2.2 Reduce access time in the county

Philip Ryan (South Tipperary Voluntary Community Group Platform) reviewed the documentation in relation to a strategic theme on reducing access time in the county. He drew the Board’s attention to the following four implications:

- There is a danger that access time will be increased rather than reduced if links to the new motorways are not community friendly
- Access time could be considerably reduced by a policy of outreach and localization of services.
- There is considerable traffic congestion in Clonmel. A time policy might assist especially in encouraging the delivery goods away from peak traffic times.
- A county transport policy is also needed to encourage the availability and access to sustainable modes of transport. Incentives need to be structured so that car-pooling; out of town centre supervised car parks, park and ride, etc can become viable.
- A lot of time is spent commuting in the county particularly to Clonmel. There must be scope to grow small businesses in the more rural locations.

2.3 Matchmaker approach to Economic Development Services

The County Economic Strategy does needs to focus on selecting the matches that can deliver results.

The inclusion of Tipperary Institute as a member of the County Development Board will strengthen the Board in addressing the task of matching the available labour force and employment opportunities.

A second key result area for the county is to achieve greater balance in the development of the County. Clonmel is projected to grow substantially and is also faced with the consequences of congestion and too rapid growth. But Clonmel is not centrally located in South Tipperary. Is there an alternative for investors?

The other main towns are not as competitive in attracting investment. Carrick on Suir is responding to the opportunities of its good location adjacent to Waterford, Clonmel and Kilkenny City. The housing market in particular is vibrant there.

The County needs a counterbalance to the economic strength of the Clonmel-Carrick on Suir corridor. The three next biggest centres are Tipperary Town, Cashel and Cahir, all designated heritage towns. Currently these towns are operating as individual units competing for investment. But none of them is strong enough to sustain the population of their electoral areas.

A strategic option that could be considered is the polycentric option – linking the three towns together (population 10,000+) into a unified economic development strategy. A strategy of growth based on Clonmel-Carrick and on Tipperary Town-Cashel-Cahir could impact on almost all of the county except for the Slieve Ardagh area (part of which will be influenced by Kilkenny City and may also benefit if a strategy of linking Carlow, Kilkenny and Clonmel develops at regional level). The equine industry is also particularly strong in the Fethard-Killenaule area.

A third key result area is to increase the number of entrants from the county to third level colleges. A figure equal to 3% of the population of South Tipperary entered third level for the first time in the year 2000. What scope is there to increase this percentage? If there is an increase on student numbers, are there plans in Tipperary Institute and Waterford Institute of Technology to cope with additional numbers?

2.4 A holistic approach to social inclusion service provision

This strategic theme is likely to form the core of the County Social Strategy. The challenges in addressing this goal are well documented in the South Eastern Health Board policy paper circulated to Board members. These include:

- Targeting shared resources at agreed priority groups (inter agency work requires considerable staff time)
- Structuring service delivery so that it meets the needs of clients rather than agencies.

It was agreed that other relevant stakeholders would be requested to prepare position papers on the implementing of the ‘holistic approach’ strategic theme based on the South Eastern Health Board template.

2.5 Provide professional backing to support cultural service provision

Pat Moroney reviewed the main implications of this theme

- There are resource, organizational and relationship implications from employing a dedicated cultural officer and specialists
- But the benefits of a professional support approach should be cost effective especially in enhancing the contribution of the voluntary sector (this needs a cost-benefit analysis)
- Should culture be addressed at a County Tipperary level (many voluntary groups already operate at that level and there are county coaching plans for some sports organizations).

2.6 Maximise the contribution of the community and voluntary sector to social inclusion and cultural development

Darragh Murphy (BNS Rural Development) reviewed the main implications of this theme:

- Reduced availability of volunteers to participate within local communities
- Need for structured pathways to make volunteerism more attractive for new entrants
- Need for new organisation structures – task groups within an overall legal structure, simplification of bureaucratic requirements
- Ease the pressure placed on communities by reducing the demand on communities to provide matching funding and to provide alternative support to the sector

Additional Board member input on this strategic theme included:

- There is a need to get young people involved as volunteers. Accreditation may be a mechanism for this. Tipperary Institute could play a significant role in that regard.
- People may be afraid to volunteer because of insurance and child welfare concerns.
- There is a trend among the general public to give money rather than time to community work.
- The Celtic Tiger is also having an impact on volunteers. There are less people available for Community Employment Schemes. Also with considerable job movement, key professional posts (such as social workers, development workers, outreach workers) can sometimes not be filled.
- How many development workers are there in the county? Is it sustainable to adopt an approach of development workers, outreach workers and linkages to the community and voluntary sector. A major challenge for Ireland is to find a mechanism that will trigger new voluntary endeavor. Advice and guidance may be available from the National Pillar of the Voluntary and Community Sector and other County/City Development Boards.

2.7 Outreach in terms of information/ services provision

Mary O'Halloran reviewed the main implications of this strategic theme:

- Quality is the key criteria if opting for outreach approaches to services provision (this includes sufficient staffing able to give the necessary service as well as the technology). One stop shops may be the most suitable for the towns but options are also required for villages which are currently losing services)
- The decline of citizen participation in the voluntary delivery of services (addressed under 2.6 – but rigid structures imposed by state bodies may not suit the volunteer movement.
- Role of agencies providing information and services – linkages between agencies not just at county level but also regionally and nationally are critical before providing new services in order to avoid confusion and duplication. One key task is the monitoring of existing measures in place and evaluating their impact.

2.8 Facilities for a generation

Cllr Susan Meagher reviewed the main implications of this strategic theme

- Sports and social facilities are needed at four levels – community, sub county, county and regional. The regional level is additional to those suggested by the Cultural Working Group.
- In developing facilities, more use needs to be made of schools, so that duplication is avoided.

- There is a link between facilities and item 2.7 (on outreach services). Perhaps these themes can be combined to look at the services and facilities and infrastructure (including IT) needed at all four levels.
- A needs analysis should then be carried out and a development plan to address the needs developed.

3. New Appointments

Mr Philip Ryan has been appointed Coordinator with the South Tipperary Voluntary and Community Group Platform. Philip is based in the Craft Granary, Cahir, Co Tipperary and can be also contacted by telephone (052-45843), mobile (086-6064883), and e mail (southtipplatform@eircom.net).

Mr Pat Kelly is the new General Manager of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs in South Tipperary. Pat replaces John Regan and is based in the Department Offices, Government Buildings, The Quay, Clonmel.

Dr Kathryn O'Donoughue has been appointed to the Education Officer role in Clonmel Community Partnership. Kathryn will have responsibility for co-ordinating the implementation of the strategic plan to counter educational disadvantage in Clonmel.