



Annual Report 2007

Compiled by Eamonn Henry, Coordinator Offaly Sports Partnership

Introduction:

The following report presents an outline of the work of Offaly Sports Partnership. It is presented in 2 sections: –

1. A background to the Partnership
2. Key areas of work of the partnership since the appointment of the Co-ordinator in October 2006. This section will make mention of: –
 - Expansion of the management committee
 - Commencement of the strategic planning process
 - Development of website and cooperate logo
 - Update of club database
 - Delivery of the Buntus programme
 - Training programmes and workshops for sports clubs in the areas of Code of Ethics, First Aid, SAQ, Sign language for water sport and Capital Funding
 - Supporting development of capital funding applications
 - Submission to the National facilities strategy
 - Administration of sports grants
 - Supporting the integration of migrant community into sport
 - Application for a Sports Inclusion Development Officer
 - Physical activities for older people
 - Developing partnerships to increase Traveller participation in sport
 - Physical activity through dance
 - Application under the women in sport initiative
 - Liaison with NGBs
 - Work undertaken by students on placement with the Partnership

1. Background to Offaly Sports Partnership:

The prioritisation of a Local Sports Partnership for Co. Offaly was first proposed in the 10 year County Development Strategy of Offaly County Development Board published in 2002 (Bringing the Future into Focus 2002 – 2012).

In February 2003 the Community and Enterprise Section of Offaly County Council engaged a student from Tralee IT to help progress the development of the Partnership. In February 2003 an interagency group was convened with a view to progressing the establishing a Local Sports Partnership.

Agreement was reached to develop the Partnership and the original group of stakeholders agreed to act as an interim Sports Partnership until full support for a designated Partnership was received. In the first half of 2003 a number of consultations with sports clubs and the general public were held across Offaly to help inform the development of a submission to the Irish Sports Council for designation and funding. A proposal was made to the Irish Sports Council and four members of the Partnership (Ann Dillon, Community & Enterprise Section, Offaly County Council, Padraig Boland and Eamonn Henry, Local Development representatives and June Bolger, Health Promotion section of the Midland Health Board) travelled to Dublin in November 2003 to make the case to the Sports Council for Offaly to receive designation.

Four new Partnerships received designation in 2004 – Co. Offaly obtained the status of a development site. This status ensured that the County received a small annual grant from the Irish Sport Council to maintain some of the momentum after the first year of establishment. It further ensured that the County was next in line for funding as soon as government commitments were made to the Sports Council for further expansion of the network of Local Sports Partnerships.

Nationally the further roll out of the initiative was delayed due to an independent evaluation of the Sports Partnership programme commissioned by the Department of Arts Sport and Tourism in 2004. This evaluation was not completed and made public until the latter half of 2005. In line with the recommendations of the independent evaluation the interim Board of Offaly Sports Partnership was asked to establish under the structure of the County Development Board, which was agreed to. Heads of Agreement were signed between Offaly County Council and the Irish Sports Council in 2006 and full funding received. Following a recruitment process, a co-ordinator was appointed and commenced work at the end of October 2006.

Throughout the three and a half years that the County had an interim Sports Partnership, a student was appointed each year for 6 – 9 months at a time. These appointments which were hosted and funded by Offaly County Council were invaluable in terms of: –

- Starting to develop a role for the Partnership
- Taking activity programmes into schools and communities
- Undertaking surveys and research that would further inform the work of Offaly Sports Partnership
- Hosting some club workshops

Special thanks goes to the four students that worked with the partnership during this period; Shaun Hennessey, Emma Tierney, Emmett Scully and Declan Coyne. During the interim period, a number of the partners also provided support to clubs and communities on the ground through activities like assisting in the development of sports capital applications.

2. Areas of Work since the Appointment of the Co-ordinator:

Expansion of the Management Committee

The interim Sports Partnership had a patron and representation from the following agencies / sectors:

–

- Offaly County Council (1)
- HSE (1)
- Offaly VEC (1)
- FÁS (1)
- An Garda Síochána (1)
- Public representation (1)
- Offaly LEADER Company (1)
- Local Development Companies (3 – OAK Partnership, West Offaly Partnership and Tullamore Wider Options)

Following designation and appointment of the co-ordinator, the management committee agreed to expand (and rationalise) its committee as following: –

- Public representatives (increase from 1 to 2)
- The Private Sector (1 seat)
- Disability representative (1 seat)
- Third level sector (1 seat)
- Sports sector (4 seats¹)
- Local and Rural Development Companies (reduce from 4 to 1 on completion of the cohesion process to establish a single unified structure for deliver of local and rural development programmes)

A presentation was made to Offaly County Council and the elected councillors choose two of their members to sit on the Partnership. The seats for sports sector representatives and the private sector were publicly advertised and expressions of interest were sought. Following receipt of these the interim committee endorsed the 6 new members of the Board. The Board further agreed that Athlone Institute of Technology be requested to nominate the third level representative. As it is expected that a disability forum for sport will be established at a future date following the appointment of a Sports Inclusion Development Officer, it was agreed to make personal contact with a suitable representative to fill the role in the interim in order to help inform the strategic planning process. The cohesion process has not yet been brought to a conclusion, thus the local and rural development sector has not as yet been rationalised. Table 1 below outlines the current members of the Management Committee:

–

¹ Following receipt and assessment of applications for these seats it was agreed to increase the number from 4 to 5.

Name	Representing
Matt Connor	Patron of the Partnership
Padraig Boland (Chairperson)	West Offaly Partnership
Anne Sullivan (deputising for Ann Dillon)	Offaly County Council
Pat Leogue	OAK Partnership
Anne Starling	Tullamore Wider Options
John Moran	Offaly LEADER Company
Miriam O'Callaghan	Offaly VEC
Clodagh Armitage	HSE
Garda Ger Lawlor	An Garda Siochana
Sean O'Brien	FÁS
Councillor John Carroll	Public Representative
Councillor Percy Clendennen	Public Representative
Joe Meegan	Third Level representative
Orla Dempsey	Disability representative
Barry Keegan	Private sector
Hughie Egan	Sports sector (GAA)
Karl Bond Senior	Sports sector (FAI)
Grainne McIntyre	Sports sector (Camogie)
Jude Feehan	Sports sector (Community Games)
Georgina Touhey	Sports sector (Athletics and Boxing)

Table 1 – Management Committee of Offaly Sports Partnership



Management Committee of Offaly Sports Partnership

Commencement of the Strategic Planning Process

Following appointment of the Co-ordinator, the executive agreed that Mr. Frank Fahey of Fizzical Ltd be engaged to facilitate the strategic planning process for the Partnership given the level of work he did undertaken in the past with the interim Partnership, as well as his knowledge of the history and evolution of Offaly Sports Partnership.

A number of activities were undertaken to progress the strategic plan for the partnership:–

- Four consultative meetings were held with the sports sector across the County to look at the findings from past consultations and to validate, reject, add to or subtract from these. Thereafter a meeting of the sports representatives on the management committee was called to highlight the emerging themes and propose possible actions for consideration
- Past information gathered was collated and presented to committee members involved with the community sector for consideration and for proposal of pilot actions
- A survey of the primary school sector was developed by the facilitator and the HSE representative. This was administered by the 2 students on placement. The facilitator, co-ordinator and two students on placement met to consider the findings from this survey
- A training day on the SPEAK monitoring and evaluation system further helped to focus the direction that the Partnership sees itself moving towards
- Two drafts were presented to the Management committee and a lengthy meeting was held to consider the second draft in particular. Ten submissions were received from members of the management committee following circulation of this draft. Currently the plan is being drafted for the third time

The strategic planning process encountered delays and was not without its challenges. There was limited contact with the facilitator from May to September due to personal health and family reasons. At committee level there were conflicting views on the process for developing the plan, the degree and level of consultation and information gathering needed and the duration that should be allocated to the process. It is now hoped that the plan will be publicly launched in February 2008.

Development of Website and Corporate Logo

Brosna Press were appointed to develop the corporate logo and produce stationary for the partnership. A choice of two concepts were developed and voted on by members of the management committee. Figure 1 below shows the logo that was chosen by a majority vote.



Doster Ltd has been engaged to develop the website for the Partnership. This is currently under construction.

Update of Club Database

A review of the database of the interim Sports Partnership found a large number of gaps and out of date contacts. Lee Deverell, a student from Carlow IT who worked on Offaly County Council’s summer placement scheme, and attached to the Sports Partnership, undertook a comprehensive review of the old database and updated this. This exercise involved contacting the Irish Sports Council for a listing of all recognised governing bodies of sport in Ireland. Thereafter she established the relevant county or regional contact for each sport and contacted these for contact lists in Co. Offaly. Based on this work there are currently 247 contacts on the LSP database as follows –

Sport		Number
GAA	Senior Clubs	43
	Juvenile Clubs	28
	Independent Secretaries	17
	Total GAA	88
FAI (Soccer)	Senior Clubs	27
	Schoolboys/schoolgirls	10
	Total Soccer (FAI)	37
Golf	Men’s	9
	Ladies	5
	Total Golf contacts	14
Community Games		12
Camogie		12
Ladies Football		12
Badminton		9
Angling		7
Pitch & Putt		6
Rugby		5
Table Tennis		5
Special Olympics		5
Equestrian		5

Athletics		4
Boxing		4
Handball		3
Swimming		3
Basketball		2
Cycling		2
Tennis		2
Wheelchair Sport		2
Rowing		1
American Football		1
Canoeing		1
Gymnastics		1
Hockey		1
Motor Cycling		1
Motor Sport		1
Mountaineering		1

Table 2 – Sports club contacts on Sports Partnership Database

Delivery of Buntús programme

To date the Buntús generic teacher training programme has been delivered to 38 primary schools in the County. It is anticipated that a further 12 will be completed before the Christmas holidays. Offaly Sports Partnership anticipates that the remaining 16 primary schools in Co. Offaly will have received the Buntús training in the first or second school term in 2008.

Offaly County Childcare Committee organised for 20 childcare providers to receive the Buntús Start training and equipment packs. A further training on use of the parachutes will be delivered to these providers.

Training Programmes and Workshops for Sports Clubs

The specific training programmes and workshops included: –

Code of Ethics – 57 volunteers received the 4 hour basic awareness training during 2007 to date. These trainings were held in both Tullamore and Birr. The brake down in terms of sports was as follows: –

Camogie	15	Hockey	2
Golf	11	GAA	1
Swimming	10	Community Games	1
Canoeing	6	Rugby	1
Special Olympics	4	Soccer	1
Badminton	2	Multi sporty	1
Ladies Football	2	Total	57

First Aid – 12 volunteers (11 completed) received subsidised training in October and November 2007. This programme was over subscribed and it is hoped to commence a second first aid training programme in south Offaly soon.

SAQ – 39 coaches attended Foundation level SAQ training held in two locations in Co. Offaly (Shinrone and Tullamore). A level 1 programme is planned for Saturday 17th November in Kilcormac. It is anticipated that a minimum 20 coaches will attend this training.

Capital Funding – Over 40 people attended the sports capital workshop organised by the Sports Partnership in November 2006 (falling the call from the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism for applications). The workshop clashed with the monthly meeting of the Offaly GAA County Board and a brief presentation was also made to GAA delegates at the end of their meeting. The partnership felt that the workshop on Sports Capital funding for the 2008 round should be held in advance of the call from the Department and a workshop was held on October 3rd. Twenty three people from a host of clubs attended this workshop.

Sign Language – Offaly Sports Partnership has collaborated with Tullamore Canoe Club and the National Association of the Deaf to organise sign language training that will allow coaches of water sports to provide coaching through sign to people who are deaf or have hearing impediment. 10 volunteers attended this 15 hour programme

Supporting the Development of Capital Funding Applications

Offaly Sports Partnership was directly involved in supporting the development of 4 applications for capital funding and provided letters of support to a number more. Since the establishment of the interim Sports Partnership in 2003, and full designation in 2006 there has been a sizable increase in the levels of funding secured in the County.

2007 has been Offaly's most successful year to date in accessing funding under the Sports Capital Programme. The Department approved a total of €2,048,000 for the County, up from €869,000 in 2006 and €1,235,000 in 2005, the County's most successful year in the past. The County ranked 14th out of 26 counties in terms of overall allocations. Adjusted as a percentage of population Offaly was approved for the third highest allocation per capita. Table 3 below indicates the approvals to the County.

Club / Organisation	Allocation
Offaly GAA County	€400,000
Birr GAA Club	€175,000
Edenderry Town FC	€125,000
Walsh Island GAA Club	€110,000
Kilcormac / Killoughey GAA Club	€100,000
Kinnity GAA Club	€100,000
Birr Town FC	€90,000
Frankford United FC	€80,000
Erin Rovers GAA Club	€80,000
St. Brigid's GAA Club	€60,000
Birr Swimming Pool	€60,000
Ballycumber Leamonaghan Community Development Ltd	€60,000
Banagher United Soccer Club	€60,000
Clara GAA Club	€60,000
Coolderry GAA Club	€60,000
Tubber GAA Club	€55,000
Raheen GAA Club	€50,000
Killurin GAA Club	€50,000
Birr Snooker and Social Club	€40,000
Killoughey Community Centre Ltd	€40,000
Banagher Shannon Bank Park	€30,000
Doon GAA Club	€25,000
Durrow GAA Club	€15,000
Crinkle GAA Club	€15,000

Tullamore GAA Club	€15,000
Killeigh Schoolboys / Schoolgirls Soccer Club	€11,000
Ferbane GAA Club	€7,000
Special Olympics Offaly	€5,000
Tullamore Pitch & Putt Club	€5,000
Tullamore Canoe Club	€5,000
Total	€2,048,000

Table 3 – Approvals to Co. Offaly from 2007 Sports Capital Programme

Submission to the National Facilities Strategy

Offaly Sports Partnership and Offaly County Council made a joint submission on the National Sports Facilities Strategy. Appendix 1 is a copy of the submission made.

Administration of Club Grants

Since the appointment of the Co-ordinator, Offaly Sports Partnership has administered two grant schemes with the objective of increasing participation in sport: –

1. The Youth in Sport Scheme previously administered by Offaly VEC was transferred to the Sports Partnership in 2006. From an available fund of €15,000, a total of 43 applicants each received an average grant of approximately €350. Offaly Sports Partnership made no changes to the scheme as previously administered by the VEC. However it has been reviewed and future schemes can be expected to be more competitive and have a stronger developmental focus
2. €33,000 was secured from Dormant Accounts to increase participation of disadvantaged young people in sport. The Partnership limited this competition to a maximum five grants as follows, 1 competition in each of the four electoral areas in the county for a grant of €6,000 and one countywide competition for a grant of €9,000. The beneficiaries of the grants were: –
 - Tullamore Ladies Football Club (Tullamore)
 - The Acorn Project (Edenderry)
 - Cloghan Boxing Club (Ferbane)
 - Crinkle Sport and Recreation Centre (Birr)
 - Offaly Camogie Board (County applicant)

There was a major spin off from this programme in the Edenderry electoral area. Three unsuccessful applicants received funding for very worthy projects from OAK Partnership or the North Offaly Development Fund.

Supporting the Integration of Migrants into Sport

Offaly Sports Partnership secured funding of €69,000 under the National Action Plan against Racism for a programme designed to integrate adult migrant communities into sporting activities in the County. Co-ordination of the programme was set out for tender and the contract was won by Fox Timmons & Associates.

A high degree of contact work with migrant communities in the County was undertaken and provision was made to facilitate groups of migrants to access training facilities. The project proposal made provision for coaching costs but this was not taken up by the migrants – the initial priority was to meet socially and train.

This project encountered a number of challenges along the way such as: –

- Demand had been created for some indoor sports and this fell back due to the early spell of fine weather in late April / early May
- Demand for the sport of boxing could not be facilitated due to the short time frame of the project and international regulations associated with adult boxing
- Some sports clubs were uncooperative towards the project and felt that the targeting of migrants was a stigmatising approach to sports development

Despite all of the above difficulties, a successful end of project tournament with over 60 migrants was held on the weekend of June 30th / July 1st in Tullamore. Three sports were featured, soccer, volleyball and basketball.

The project is continuing to support migrant communities to access training facilities. Integration is happening slowly. For example the Edenderry senior basketball team is comprised of Irish and Eastern European players; there are regular friendly volleyball challenges between two teams in the County (one Irish and one Polish) and visits to neighbouring counties are also a feature of the social playing of volleyball. The group of Polish players that meet each Saturday is hoping to establish a volleyball club that will be open to all nationalities. Soccer continues to be played but very much on a same nationality basis.

There were project savings due to the low uptake in coaching that had been budgeted for. A proposal is being made to the National Action Plan against Racism to use these savings to continue to support adult migrants access participation opportunities and to host inter school activities of mixed race participation.

The Partnership also participated in the round table discussion on the European Year for intercultural dialogue organised by NCCRI and plans to make a written submission in this regard with specific

emphasis on the need of continued supported and resourced work with migrant communities and the opportunities that sport in particular can provide for integration.

Application for a Sports Inclusion Development Officer

Offaly Sports Partnership made a successful application to the Dormant Accounts fund for funding to employ a Sports Inclusion Development Officer to help support and develop disability sport in the County. This post has been advertised and applications have been short listed. Interviews will be held in early December and it is hoped that the post will be filled by early February

Physical Activities for Older People

A refresher course for trained Physical Activity Leaders (PALs) was held in Rath in November 2006. This was organised by the HSE and was the Partnership's first introduction to the Go for Life programme.

Offaly LSP hosted Go for Life in Tullamore in conducting its regional review in October 2007. This was a very successful day with over 30 leaders from the four counties in attendance.

In addition information was distributed on the annual Go for Life grant scheme and 3 follow up queries were supported

Partnership to increase Traveller Participation in Sport–

Following the call by Pobal in July for the Community Services Programme, the Co-ordinator met with LeAnn Greville, the Social Economy Support Worker of the Cohesion Working Group. Following this meeting an outline proposal on how investment to increase Traveller participation in sport and physical activity might be secured. This proposal was discussed informally with the Traveller Health Unit of the HSE and a Community Services Officer in FÁS. Thereafter a public meeting of possible stakeholders was called.

Following this meeting agreement was reached to proceed with: –

- A LTI (Local Training Initiative) application to FÁS to facilitate the training of Physical Activity Tutors from the Traveller communities in Offaly and from other communities experiencing disadvantage
- An expression of interest to Pobal for technical support to develop a 3 year business plan that would employ trained Travellers to deliver programmes within the Traveller community on an ongoing basis

The structure of Offaly Sports Partnership does not permit it to lead out the above mentioned programmes if funding is secured. Local Development Company, Tullamore Wider Options has agreed

to act as the lead body. The vast majority of the technical support in developing the proposals has come of the Sports partnership.

Physical Activity through Dance

Offaly Sports Partnership entered into a collaborative programme with the Arts office in Offaly County Council to promote physical activity through dance. This action was approved by the Irish Sports Council as part of the annual work plan of Offaly Sports partnership, and later supported by the HSE (with funding directed via the Sports Council).

The dance programme was delivered in the south of the County and involved a short taster programme being brought into schools followed by 3 summer workshops (June 22nd – 24th, July 20th – 22nd and August 24th – 26th) in the Birr Theatre and Arts Centre deliver by a professional dance company.

Forty three young people participated on the summer programme with almost 75% of these coming from the Birr area. The remaining participants were primarily from the towns of Kinnitty, Banagher, Ferbane and Kilcormac.

Of the 43 participants, 36 were young girls aged from 12 to 15 years, 5 were girls aged 16 years and over, and the remaining 2 were boys

Women in Sport

Offaly Sports Partnership secured €10,000 under the Women in Sport programme from the Irish Sports Council to deliver an aerobic, LME and mixed circuit training programme targeting teenage girls across the County. Work has commenced on identifying locations for this programme which is scheduled to commence in early January.

Liaison with NGB

The partnership has had contact with a number of NGBs and is slowly becoming involved in joint initiatives. Development officers (either County or regional) from the following NGBs were met: –

- GAA
- FAI
- Camogie
- Golf
- Badminton
- Rugby
- Athletics
- Basketball
- Volleyball

It is anticipated that joint initiatives with NGBs will form a key component in future work plans.

Work undertaken by students on placement with the Partnership

The Partnership continued to have a placement programme for students. We were unfortunate that available candidates from Tralee IT had obtained placements to other programmes in advance of the Sports Partnership developing a specification. A graduate placement programme was developed instead, and David McCaffery, a recently qualified graduate from Waterford IT worked with the Partnership from April to September. David's work involved the delivery of activity programmes in schools that had applied for the Buntus programme but could not be reached before the summer. He also worked with local and community development programmes during the summer delivering physical activities to disadvantaged rural and urban communities. A link was also made by David with the IRFU to promote the game in towns with rugby clubs.

In the absence of an administrator in the Partnership, Offaly County Council assigned Lee Deverrell to provide administrative assistance as part of a summer work programme. Lee was responsible for updating the database, organising the autumn schedule of workshops and she also assisted David in delivering summer activities.

The Partnership has built up a relationship with Athlone IT since the management committee was expanded and currently offers a graduate placement to the college. Pamela Kelleghan is currently involved in delivering an agility challenge / sports hall athletics programme in locations across the county.

It is hoped that the Partnership will continue student placement programmes in future years. These have proved invaluable to both the Partnership in achieving its objectives and to the students in becoming familiar in the sports and recreation sector.

Conclusion

Overall a large amount of work was undertaken and relationships developed in a relatively short space of time.

Delays were encountered on the Strategic Planning process and in relation to obtaining clearance for the appointment of staff. It is hoped that from early 2008, with the plan in place and a staff complement of co-ordinator, administrator, SIDO and a sports development officer on student placement, the work of the Sports Partnership will gather further momentum.

In the course of the year it became important to learn to be patient. Developing partnerships, making longer term plans (as in the case of the disability programme and the Traveller participation project) requires time and waiting for funding decisions demands patience. However when these finally happen and come together it is normally very worthwhile