



## ANNUAL REPORT 2015

Compiled by the staff of Offaly Sports Partnership



Offaly Sports Partnership is a sub committee of Offaly County Council, funded by Sport Ireland (formerly the Irish Sports Council) and hosted by the Local Community Development section of Offaly County Council.

## Introduction

Offaly Sports Partnership is an inter agency and multi sectoral sub committee of Offaly County Council. It is hosted by the Local Community Development section of Offaly County Council; and receives its annual operating budget from Sport Ireland.

In 2015, the Partnership concluded delivery of its second strategic plan for the period 2011 to 2015. This annual report is the last of five reports for the five years covered by this plan.

### The Board of Offaly Sports Partnership

In 2015, there were four changes to the board of Offaly Sports Partnership: -

- Mary Cotter replaced Miriam O Callaghan as Laois / Offaly Education and Training Board's representative
- Mary Duffy replaced Kathleen Carroll as Offaly's Sports Ability Forum representative
- Miriam O Callaghan continued to represent Offaly Camogie on the board
- Pdraig O Meara replaced Pauric Pierce as Offaly GAA's representative

The remaining agencies reconfirmed their existing nominees to the board, with Matt Conor remaining on as patron to the Partnership in 2015. The 15 board members for 2015, and our patron Matt Conor are shown below.

#### *Offaly Sports Partnership Board 2015*

*Missing from the photo: -*

*Matt Conor*

*Patron, Offaly Sports Partnership*

The executive of the Partnership in 2015 consisted of Miriam O Callaghan (Chair), Jude Feehan (Vice chair), Barry Keegan (Financial monitor), Monica Cleary (Offaly County Council representative), and Darren Butler (Sports rep).

In addition to the executive, there were two sub groups in 2015: -

- Cycle forum - chaired by Clodagh Armitage
- Sports Ability Forum - chaired by

The cycle forum took the lead in the planning of Bike week activities; while the Sports Ability Forum worked with the Sports inclusion Development Officer to develop and deliver sport, physical activity and active living programmes for people with disabilities.

In addition to the sub groups referred to above the Coordinator represented the Partnership at national and regional meetings hosted by Sport Ireland and other partner agencies.

### Staffing in 2015

In 2015, Offaly County Council continued to facilitate the employment of two full time staff; and one part time staff for the Partnership. The two core positions of Coordinator and Administrator were 100% funded by Sport Ireland; while the post of Sports Inclusion Development Officer (SIDO) was 50% funded by the Sport Ireland, 35% funded by the Health Services Executive and 15% funded by Offaly County Council.

Eamonn Henry continued as Coordinator for a ninth year; Olivia Murphy continued in the role of Administrator for a seventh year; while Aoife Byrne continued in the role of Sports Inclusion Development Officer for a second year. The staff team are shown below.

### **Contracted tutors / Interns / Student placements / Volunteers**

Much of the work of the Partnership throughout the year was also made possible through the efforts of contracted tutors, interns, students on placement and a number of volunteers who assisted the Partnership in the delivery of a range of events. These included: -

- Jean Brady - schools' programme tutor
- Declan Cooke - community coaching programme coordinator, Birr
- Pauline Curley - meet and train programme tutor
- Buntu Mlsena - community coaching programme coordinator, Edenderry
- Kerry Molloy - gateway intern supporting the delivery of schools programmes
- Paul Cronin - gateway inten (on loan from Local Community Development) supporting the delivery of schools programmes
- Karen Walsh - safeguarding children workshop tutor
- Pauline Curley - meet and train programme tutor

Furthermore, three club community rugby officers assisted the Partnership in the delivery of one of its schools programmes; while the Partnership also utilised a number of national governing body recommended tutors to deliver sport specific modules as part of the community coaching programme.

In addition, the Partnership facilitated work experience placements for three transition year students during the course of the year; while students from Athlone Institute of Technology assisted in the delivery of the fifth All Ireland SPORTSHALL Athletics Championships.

The board and staff of Offaly Sports Partnership wish to express their thanks to all those that helped in the delivery of our programmes in 2015. Go raibh míle maith agaibh!

### **Strategic Plan Implementation**

During 2015, the Partnership concluded the implementation of its second five year strategic plan, "Everybody's Participation Counts 2011 - 2015".

The plan set out four priority themes: -

1. Lifelong involvement in sport
2. Sustainable inclusion
3. Dialogue to increase participation
4. The marketing of sport

The following sections in this report will give an overview of the work completed in 2015 under each of the strategic goals.

### Priority theme 1: Lifelong involvement in sport

Offaly Sports Partnership is committed to supporting lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity. Progress in achieving this goal is detailed in the following pages.

15 actions to address lifelong involvement in sport were written in to the Partnership's operational plan for 2015. Of the 15 actions outlined in the operational report, all actions were delivered on. Among the actions delivered were: -

- Inter generational events - bike week, play day, etc
- Local sports clubs / groups - bike for life, education and training for sports clubs volunteers, etc
- Operation Transformation - community transformations (Moneygall, Tullamore College, etc), operation transformation national walk day, etc
- Primary schools - fit school, inter schools events, SPORTSHALL Athletics, etc
- Post primary schools - couch to 5k, fit teen, recreation week, world marathon challenge, etc

Highlights of the year included: -



#### ***Bike week***

Bike Week 2015 took place from Saturday 13th to Sunday 22nd June with cycling events all over the country, organised by local authorities, community groups, charities and cycling groups. From free bike checks, fun cycles, lunchtime city rides, heritage cycles, electric bike races, school cycling events, road races and much more, there was something for every age and ability.



Offaly Sports Partnership in conjunction with Offaly County Council, the HSE and An Taisce delivered a range of events (i.e. bike on the bog, lunchtime cycle, schools cycling, tandem cycling, etc); and supported the delivery of seven club events in Birr, Edenderry, Ferbane and Tullamore. Almost 600 people of all ages and abilities participated in Bike Week 2015.

### **Local sports clubs / groups / organisations**

A range of programmes were delivered to support local clubs, groups and organisations in the delivery of their activities including (but not limited to): -

- Bike for Life delivered to seven participants with the support of Wolftrap Cycling Club which in turn resulted in participants taking part in the Great Dublin Bike Ride 2015



- Seven safeguarding children (formerly child protection in training) workshops delivered to nearly 100 volunteers from almost 20 clubs
- A range of education and training programmes delivered to service providers catering for people with disabilities and volunteers supporting people with disabilities. For more information on programmes delivered for people with disabilities, please see the Sports Inclusion Development Programme annual report for 2015

### **Operation Transformation**

Linked to the Operation Transformation programme, the Partnership delivered a 3k family walk on Fiona's Way for almost 150 people in January.



The Partnership also supported the delivery of community transformations in Moneygall and Tulamore College. For more information on the Tullamore College programme, check out our post primary schools activities..

### **Primary school programmes**

The Partnership supported the delivery of three programmes for primary schools in 2015: -

**Fit school** this programme was established, in the first instance, to develop, over a number of years accurate baselines of speed and endurance across the primary school population in the county. Subject to Sport Ireland approval, "Fit School" will be an ongoing project of the Partnership under its new strategic plan 2016 - 2020; and these baselines will be used to monitor improvements in fitness levels of primary school pupils across the life of future strategic plans.



31 schools, and almost 5,000 primary school pupils took part in the programme in 2015.

**Inter schools events** the Partnership supported the delivery of a number of inter schools events in 2015: -

i. **Swim gala** with the support of Aura Tullamore, the Partnership delivered an inter school swim gala for seven schools and almost 125 pupils.

ii. **Athletics programmes** the Partnership also supported the delivery of Athletics Offaly inter schools events in cross country; and track and field disciplines.



**SPORTSHALL Athletics** two primary school programmes based around the SPORTSHALL Athletics concept were delivered in 2015: -

i. **SPORTSHALL Athletics Offaly (primary)** 16 schools and almost 2,000 primary school pupils participated in the Partnership's annual SPORTSHALL Athletics programme.



ii. **5th All Ireland SPOTSHALL Athletics Championships** Offaly Sports Partnership once again coordinated the delivery of all aspects of the fifth All Ireland SPORTSHALL Athletics Championships on behalf of the wider sports partnership network in conjunction with Athletics Ireland and the Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT). 16 counties and almost 800 pupils participated. Scoil Mhuire Tullamore and Ballinamere National School represented Offaly in the 5 / 6th class and 3rd / 4th class girls category respectively, while Scoil Mhuire Bainríon Edenderry represented Offaly in the 3rd / 4th and

5 / 6th class boys categories.



### **Post primary school programmes**

The Partnership supported the delivery of four programmes for post primary schools in 2015: -



**Couch to 5k** linking into the Operation Transformation concept, Tullamore College requested the Partnership's support in delivering a "Couch to 5k" programme for junior cycle students in the college, and 5 / 6th class pupils of feeder primary schools. Approximately, 100 primary school pupils and post primary students took part in the programme which culminated in an end of programme 5k run / walk for participants.

**Fit Teen** similar to the "fit school" concept, Fit Teen is concerned, in the first instance, with the development, over a number of years of accurate baselines for speed and endurance across the post primary school population in the county. Subject to Sport Ireland approval, "Fit Teen" will be an ongoing project of the Partnership in its new strategic plan 2016 - 2020; and these baselines will be used to monitor improvements in fitness levels of post primary school students across the life of future strategic plans

**Recreation Week** with the support of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Partnership supported the delivery of recreation week for post primary school pupils in Offaly. With a focus on the outdoors, three schools and 100 students participated in a range of outdoor activities delivered by our local partner, Birr Outdoor Education Centre.



**World Marathon Challenge** The World Marathon Challenge is the largest mass participation global event for teenagers currently held.

In Offaly, the event, incorporating the John Treacy Marathon Relay Challenge in Ireland, was hosted in one location. 50 students from two schools (i.e. Sacred Heart School and Tullamore College) in Tullamore participated.

A total of five teams from Ireland participated in the global challenge which catered for 107 teams. Tullamore finished fifth overall (and first in Ireland, thereby retaining the "John Treacy Marathon Relay Challenge" title for another year).



## Priority theme 2: Sustainable inclusion

Offaly Sports Partnership is committed to delivering measures to involve, sustain and mainstream the inclusion of underrepresented groups in sport and physical activity in the county. The eight groups prioritised in the current five year strategic plan are *Low income communities (rural and urban), Older people, People with a disability, People of an ethnic minority, The unemployed, Travellers, Women and Girls and Youth at risk*. Progress in achieving this goal is detailed in the following pages.

Of the eight underrepresented groups prioritised in the current five year strategic plan, 11 actions to address sustainable inclusion for six of the underrepresented groups were written into the Partnership's operational plan for 2015. Of the 11 actions outlined in the operational report, all of the actions were delivered on. Actions were delivered in / on behalf of: -



***Low income communities / Youth at risk*** the Partnership supported the delivery of summer camps for low income communities / youth at risk through partner agencies in the county. The majority of these summer camps were supported by way of equipment provision.

***Older people*** two programmes were offered to increase the participation of older people in sport and physical activity: -

- i.* 50s bocchia programme - approximately 100 people on 18 teams from nine groups participated with Belmont Men A once aging securing victory.



- ii.* Go for Life Games - this programme is designed to encourage older people to become involved in recreational sport. Local leagues are organised by the Partnership and participants can go on and represent Offaly at the national Go for Life Games annually. 40 older people participated in the local league with 15 going on to represent Offaly at the national games.





**People with a disability** Aoife Byrne, Sports Inclusion Development Officer (SIDO) continued to deliver programmes for people with disabilities in 2015. Programmes were delivered to support the participation of people with physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities; as well as those experiencing mental health difficulties. Ms Byrne also delivered a number of education and training programmes; and pan disability programmes. Highlights of the year included: -



Much of the work surrounding programmes for people with physical disabilities focused on making Tullamore Town Park more accessible for people with such disabilities. Funding was secured to install an "All Ability Whirl" in the park, in keeping with previous improvements in 2014 to the park for people with physical disabilities.

A range of capacity building programmes were delivered for 65 people with sensory disabilities. As a result of this work, excellent working relationships have been established between the Partnership, service providers such as National Council for the Blind and DeafHear, national governing bodies of sport, and local clubs / organisations. This capacity building work has resulted in people with sensory disabilities going on to join local clubs and organisations to facilitate their continued participation in physical activity and sport.



Similarly, a range of capacity building programmes were delivered for 100 people with intellectual disabilities. As a result of this work, new Special Olympics clubs have been established; existing Special Olympics Clubs have been supported to grow; and adults with intellectual disabilities have become involved with physical activity programmes through local gyms and sports clubs.

Operation Transformation and Go for Life Games programmes for people experiencing mental health difficulties. Across the two programmes, 120 adults participated. Feedback from the Operation Transformation programme has been impressive, and has aligned with findings of published articles. Participant observations included: -

I breathe easier, have less breathlessness, I'm more happy and less anxious

I'm a lot more active and my mood is better

I feel much better in myself, exercise gives me energy

The delivery of training and education programmes under the Sports Inclusion Development Programme (SIDP) has introduced post primary students to the area of disability and inclusive participation; has enabled teachers to adapt their physical education classes for children with disabilities; has provided personal assistants and sports club volunteers with the skills they need to support their clients and new athletes in their pursuit of physical activity and sporting opportunities.



A major feature of the SIDO's work in 2015 was the delivery of pan disability programmes. Almost 550 people have been accommodated on pan disability and inclusive programmes. Among the successes on this programme are: -

- i. the establishment of a new Judo Assist club in Birr
- ii. the participation of Offaly School for Special Education in Special Olympics events; and

"18 students graced the mat full of enthusiasm and joy". Thanks to Aoife at Offaly Sports Partnership for her invaluable assistance", Judo Assist

"Good news, St Joseph's and OSSE have entered athletes in the athletics on the 9th May (Kilkenny). Delighted to see this, first time in athletics for both. The support they've got over the past 12 months has definitely helped with this", Patrick O Reilly, Special Olympics Leinster Regional Development Officer

- iii. the Midlands Boccia League, an Offaly / Westmeath Sports Partnership collaborative programme



**People of an ethnic background including Travellers** a range of programmes were offered to people of an ethnic background including Travellers in 2015: -



The ***Integrated Academy for Athletics Performance (IAAP)*** continued to run in Portarlinton in 2015. The long term goal of the academy is the visible participation of persons of a migrant background at all levels (local, county, regional / provincial, national and international) in mainstream athletics in numbers, which at a minimum, is reflective of the new makeup of Irish society. As visible participation within the mainstream is the project goal, this programme is one of the Partnership's few programmes where performance is used as a measure of its impact.

Two programmes (one indoor and one outdoor) were delivered across the calendar year in Portarlinton for up to 20 participants. Following their successes in the academy, five participants went on to join local athletics clubs in Portarlinton and Tullamore to enable their participation at provincial and national level whilst still retaining their links with the academy.

***Meet and Train*** programmes in the areas of swimming and walking were offered to approximately 20 ***female Travellers*** in 2015. with the support of Offaly Traveller Movement and Birr Leisure Centre.



Offaly Traveller Movement

***The unemployed*** with the securing of funding under the Dormant Accounts Scheme via Sport Ireland, the Partnership delivered community coaching training for the unemployed in 2015. 20 trainees commence the community coaching programme in two locations (Birr and Edenderry). Edenderry proved to be a particularly challenging location within which to deliver the programme, and experienced a high level of drop out.



Of the 20 who commenced the programme, 15 (11 from Birr and four from Edenderry) completed the programme. On the Birr course, some trainees expressed interest in joining the defence forces; however when the Partnership undertook fitness testing with the group, there was a realisation that trainees would struggle to pass the fitness test, particularly in respect of the 2.4k timed run that applicants are required to complete. A training programme to supplement the community coaching programme was therefore organised for trainees in Birr.

A further aspect of the course was a field trip to the Athlone Institute of Technology to discuss further education opportunities; with a number of trainees since expressing interest in further education in the future.



In addition, one trainee from the Birr programme has been recruited for the Defence Forces cadet programme.



Following the success of the community coaching programmes; in conjunction with Laois Sports Partnership and Potarlington Leisure Centre; and with additional support from the Dormant Accounts Scheme via Sport Ireland, an advanced cross county community coaching programme with a specific focus on employment skills for the leisure industry has been planned for 2016.

### **Priority theme 3: Dialogue to increase participation**

Offaly Sports Partnership is committed to facilitating dialogue between stakeholders to support sustained increase in participation. Progress in achieving this goal is detailed below.

Three actions to ensure “dialogue to increase participation” were written into the Partnership’s operational plan for 2015. Of the three actions outlined in the operational report, all actions were delivered on. The actions delivered included: -

#### ***Board, Executive and Working Group meetings***

- The Board of the Partnership met six times in 2015
- The Executive of the Partnership met once
- The cycle forum met on a number of occasions and were heavily involved in the planning and delivery of actions for Bike Week
- The Sports Ability Forum met on a number of occasions and were heavily involved in supporting the Sports Inclusion Development officer (SIDO) to deliver the Sports Inclusion Development Programme (SIDP)

***SPORTSHALL Athletics working group*** this action was linked to priority theme one and involved the Partnership working with Athletics Ireland and other Sports Partnerships in the promotion of SPORTSHALL Athletics in 2015. From this work, 16 counties and almost 800 pupils participated in the fifth annual All Ireland SPORTSHALL Athletics Championships.

***Community Sports Facilities working groups*** this action entailed the Partnership sitting on two community sports facilities working groups to assist in: -

- i. the development of a Community Activity Plan and Community Sports Hub for Daingean. Whilst the development of a Community Activity Plan for Daingean was successful, unfortunately the securing of funding to develop a Community Sports Hub in Daingean was not; and
- ii. the regeneration of Blundell Park, Edenderry

### Priority theme 4: The Marketing of Sport

Offaly Sports Partnership is committed to marketing sport and the Partnership inside and outside the county. Progress in achieving this goal is detailed below.

There were no specific actions to market sport and the Partnership written into the Partnership’s operational plan for 2015. However under the objectives outlined in our strategic plan 2011 - 2015, the following outcomes resulted: -

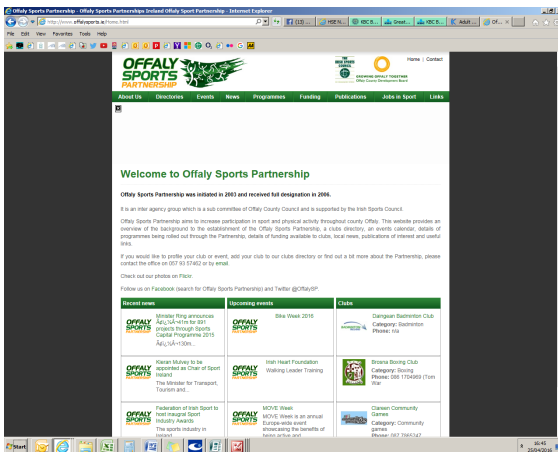
Two **mass participation events** were promoted in the county: -



- Operation Transformation walk as part of the national walk day on 17th January (125+ participants in attendance); and
- Bike Week 2015 from the 13th to 22nd June (Approximately 600participants in attendance across 11 events)



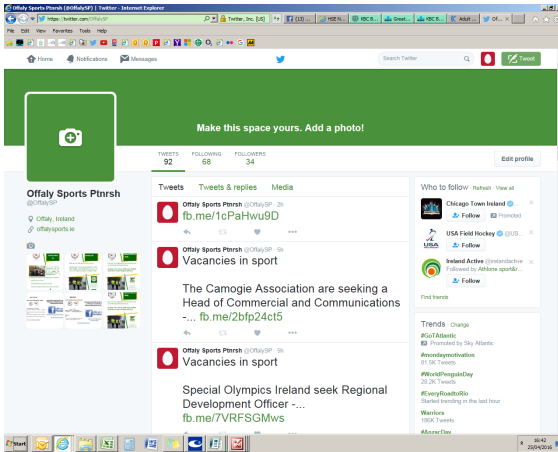
The **logo of the Partnership was widely promoted** in all communications, public meetings, events, conferences, public awareness campaigns, on tee shirts and medallions for mass participation events.



The website and social media platforms of the Partnership were continually updated with information. While the visitor statistics for [www.offalysports.ie](http://www.offalysports.ie) and [www.flickr.com/](http://www.flickr.com/)

[OffalySportsPartnership](#) are unavailable at the time of printing, at the close of 2015, the Partnerships's Facebook page was liked by 259 people / organisations, etc, 56% of whom are female and 42% of whom are male.

In addition, the Partnership also established a Twitter account, and a YouTube channel in 2015. While the 2015 statistics for Twitter for 2015 are unavailable at the time of printing, at the close of 2015; the Partnership's You Tube channel videos had been viewed almost 20 times.



For further information on the work of Offaly Sports Partnership, contact the office on 057 93 57462, by email to [sports@offalcoco.ie](mailto:sports@offalcoco.ie), visit [www.offalysports.ie](http://www.offalysports.ie) or follow us on [Facebook/OffalySportsPartnership](#) and [Twitter/OffalySP](#) or check out our [YouTube](#) and [Flickr](#) sites.