



LIMERICK REGENERATION AGENCIES

Limerick Regeneration Programme

Frequently asked Questions

December 2009

Q . What is the current status of the Limerick Regeneration Programme?

A . The Regeneration Programme is advancing in line with its key objectives of Social, Economic, and Physical Regeneration. The Programme received an increased budget for 2009 which was being spent on progressing the necessary early elements of the plan.

While the period, since the plan was unveiled (OCT 08) has seen a very significant Economic slump in this Country the Limerick Regeneration Programme continues to have strong National and Local support and we are pushing ahead. In particular there has been, and is serious emphasis on the Social and Economic aspects of Regeneration while at the same time we are planning for Physical Regeneration .

Q . How has the Programme been affected by the severe economic downturn in the Country?

A . The Regeneration Programme is operating at a time of serious uncertainty and recession . The current scarcity of funds will undoubtedly delay some aspects of the Programme. However the Regeneration momentum can and will continue on many fronts and some considerable progress has been made. For example the core Regeneration principles of achieving integration, co-ordination of services are not always resource dependent and will continue to progress. This approach will ensure improvement in the delivery and impact of Public Services which will in turn ensure better value for public monies and a more integrated delivery of the Programme.

Q. Are the Regeneration Agencies getting full buy-in and co-operation from other Agencies and Government Departments?

A. The Principal function of the Regeneration Agencies is to get full buy-in and co-operation from other Agencies and Government Departments. This is essential. Also, we need to influence their policies and try and get change in the way that they do their business in the Regeneration Areas for the betterment of the Communities living there. We are satisfied with the progress being made on this issue but further progress is required.

Q . What actual progress has been made?

A . Much of the recommendations in the original Fitzgerald were about getting services to work better and dealing with Social problems including security. It also flagged physical stuff about appearance, dereliction, and dirt.

Significant progress has been made on a number of fronts , including 100 extra Gardai for the City, demolition of over 250 derelict houses by Limerick City Council, CCTV systems in Southill and St Mary's Park, Estate clean ups and a range of Social initiatives around Education Health, family support, Youth, Children and Recreation .

The planning and design of a number of new Housing developments for Older People is also progressing. The first new physical Development will take place in Moyross and we are hoping that this will start in 2010, other Developments in Ballinacurra, St Marys Park and Southill are at the early stages of planning and design.

A significant amount of feasibility studies have been carried out on various potential projects which were mentioned in the Masterplan and this early work will be very important in order 'to be ready' when approvals and funding are finalised.

We are proposing to implement shortly, some new sports and play facilities in each of the Areas to ensure that there are some short term benefits for Residents and their children, while the bigger Regeneration proposals are progressing. We see sport and recreation as a key catalyst for improving Social Inclusion

We have been lobbying for incentives to promote private development in the Regeneration Areas and we have been working on initiatives to promote Training, Enterprise and Jobs. We have been centrally involved with Local and Regional processes such as the Review of the local City and County Development plans and the Regional Planning Guidelines, etc. We have been working hard with Local Communities in order to build capacity and greater empowerment and participation.

This has been done through Local Regeneration Committees, Residents Fora and Regeneration Social Committees as well as the usual Local Structures operating in these areas. A new Youth Space at Galvone, Southill opened recently which was facilitated and part funded by the Agencies and it involves a number of other key stakeholders.

Q. What is Social Regeneration and what progress has been made?

A. Social Regeneration is really about families and kids and about creating a much better future for them. It involves Education as a priority, but also Health, Family and Child Support, and it involves providing proper services and facilities. It is also about Community Safety which includes Policing, Security and Enforcement and it includes the day to day management of Housing Estates. At its core it involves ongoing preventative type measures to ensure that the long existing spiral towards criminality is reversed.

Social Regeneration is the most important aspect of the Limerick Regeneration Programme, it is the most complex and the most difficult. This is so because it requires change in peoples' behaviour and culture and it also requires significant change in how Public Services are delivered, coordinated and accounted for.

A new system of monitoring the needs of Children by the various responsible State Agencies has been promoted (and funded) by the Regeneration Agencies in conjunction with the Limerick Childrens Services Committee and that work will gain significant momentum in 2010. We have also funded and promoted the roll out of the Incredible Years (behaviour) programme at schools in the Regeneration areas.

We have promoted and funded a number of family support programmes in the Four Regeneration Areas. There are now 10 Sports Development Officers operating in Limerick City promoting the involvement of kids in various sporting activities. These important positions were promoted and achieved through the efforts of the Regeneration Agencies and only 1 such position was in place prior to 2008. A key element of our Social Inclusion Policy is to support (incl small grants) local sports clubs to enable them to sustain themselves and to provide opportunities for more kids.

Q. What is Economic Regeneration and what progress is being made?

A. Economic Regeneration is about Jobs, Enterprise and Training. Without jobs ultimately, Social Regeneration will not be effective. The current Economic Climate has made this issue even more difficult. We have been working with FÁS and other Bodies on providing an enhanced level of Training in the Regeneration Areas and some initiatives are underway. We have also been examining Community Enterprise possibilities and building on some of the good projects already in place. Of course the Physical Regeneration Programme, once kicked-off, will provide a significant number of new jobs over a period of time.

In the Interim Task Force Report for the Mid-West Area (Following the Dell Jobs Loss) it is estimated that 3,000 construction and related jobs would be available if a significant number of the projects outlined in the Regeneration Programme got underway. It is also estimated following Regeneration that 4,000 new jobs could be available

Q. Are you happy with the progress being made?

A. No, We are not happy with progress to date, but there has been progress and we must continue to build on that.

Q. Are you aware of the concerns that are constantly being raised in relation to families being re housed from the Regeneration Areas to other parts of the Mid-West Region?

A. Yes, we are very aware of these concerns. Our Policy, as outlined in the Regeneration Programme is to support the Regeneration of existing communities. There is no policy of widespread dispersal but some families are not prepared or able to wait for Regeneration to be implemented and have (as is their right) been seeking re-housing from the Local Housing Authorities of Limerick City Council, Limerick County Council and Clare County Council. The numbers being re housed by the Local Authorities are small.

The Regeneration Agencies are not buying any houses in the city, or indeed anywhere else and has no intention of doing so, neither are we moving any families out, that remains and will continue to remain the responsibility and task of the Local Authorities.

Q. Is there still strong support from Government for the Regeneration Programme?

A. Yes, there was always strong Government Support for Regeneration in Limerick and there is no change in that. The challenge now is to translate such support into approvals and funding.

Q. What caused the serious decline of the Regeneration Areas?

A. A complex range of issues led to the serious decline of these Areas, it cannot be attributed to one single factor. But clearly the policy in the past of providing mass housing with inadequate facilities and services on the outskirts of Urban Areas has resulted in serious problems, not just in Limerick but in Dublin and other Irish cities and towns, and in other countries as well. We have been, and will continue to concentrate on developing solutions for the future rather than dwelling too much on how and why this awful situation arose.

Q. Is criminality the biggest issue?

A. Criminality is not the biggest issue in our view, but it is a serious problem. High-profile Gangland crime has caused major damage to the image of these communities and also to Limerick City as a whole, as well as horrendous damage caused to the individuals and families directly or indirectly affected.

In the communities themselves the damage caused by lower level anti-social behaviour, including that from children, is a bigger issue and very difficult to resolve.

Q. What happened to the Regeneration Projects that are now stalled in Dublin that were being progressed under Public-Private Partnership arrangements.

The model of Public Private Partnership (PPP) in Dublin City was dependent on a continuing strong Economy, coupled with high land values, and once the slump came, that model was far less viable.

This particular model of PPP was never intended for the Limerick Regeneration Project because the Dublin situation is in no way, or was in no way, comparable to Limerick, in relation to property or land values.

At that time in Dublin, this model was the right solution and until the Economic Slump came was achieving some success.

The Limerick Regeneration Programme sets out an investment requirement from both the Private and Public sectors over the next 10 years, and that scenario may well provide good opportunities for Public/Private Partnership in the future.

Q. It has been said that the Regeneration Project is only about freeing up land in the Regeneration Areas for profit and displacing families at the same time. What is the view of the Regeneration Agencies on this?

A. It is quite the opposite; it is about maximising the use of State Lands for the benefit of the Community in the future and for the benefit of future generations.

Q. How do the Boards of the Agencies work?

A. The Boards operate on a mix of overview and accountability. The Boards meet every two months in Limerick. They consist mainly of key Government Departments and Agencies because the work done and decisions made by these Bodies have a very significant and ongoing impact on the Regeneration Areas. Going forward most of the Regeneration Programme will be the responsibility of those bodies whose representatives sit on the Boards. The Boards also include some Representatives from the Community and Business Sectors.

The Regeneration Agencies work in a collaborative way with all relevant departments and other state agencies. These relationships are essential to the progression of the Programme.

The Boards encourage and support these relationships.

It is intended in the near future, to amalgamate the current two Boards and two Agencies into one Board and one Agency.

Q. Would it be wise to delay Physical Regeneration (i.e. new build) until many of the serious social problems are fully addressed?

A. We think it would be unsustainable and unfair to seriously delay much needed Physical Regeneration in order to first eliminate the Social Problems. The vast majority of residents in the Regeneration Areas are law abiding, salt of the earth people, who have made these areas their Community, where their children have been reared and schooled and they deserve to get a better quality of life and not continue to be neglected because of the behaviour of a few.

There is experience in this Country of some Renewal projects not achieving real success because there was too much concentration on the physical aspect, but on the other hand there is considerable experience of where strong concentration on Social issues has not achieved real success either despite significant funding etc. The Limerick Regeneration Programme has a vision and plan to tackle the three key elements which we believe are essential to ultimate success

This Regeneration job is a three-pronged process, Social, Economic and Physical. All three are required and all three should ideally happen together. It should not be one without the other two or two without the other one.

Physical Regeneration was always going to take time and no doubt will now take longer than first anticipated. However, even if there was never an Economic downturn we do not think that we could be any further than we are now, because Planning, Design, Consultation, etc is needed prior to any physical re-build.

Q. What structures have been put in place to support the communities to participate in the Regeneration process?

A. Strong community involvement and participation is essential to the success of the programme. Very significant time and effort has been invested in providing opportunities for residents to participate. This activity has been facilitated by our presence (offices) out in the areas e.g in Moyross, St. Mary's Park, and Southill.

The Local Regeneration Committees set-up by the Agencies which include Residents, Community Groups, Local Authority and Gardai, meet every month and we participate on the various Residents Fora, as well as being available to deal with individual residents on a daily basis. There has been community 'open' days newsletters etc and a door to door survey is currently ongoing.

Q. Where will the criminal families go if they are not being catered for, in the Regeneration Programme?

A. We have always indicated that Families engaged in serious Anti-Social Behaviour will not be catered for in terms of new homes, in the Regeneration Programme and as the Programme progresses each individual case/family will have to be dealt with.

It is likely that redevelopment will take place in phases, and cases will be dealt with as those phases proceed. It is not the intention to transfer problems to other Areas.

As the redevelopment phases progress, stringent measures in place will mean some families being refused new Housing so they will have to continue living in their existing homes (not transferred out) and be dealt with at a later stage.

The Regeneration Programme is a multi faceted and long term plan to ultimately deal with an array of Social problems within these areas.

Through a combination of stronger enforcement, security measures, and Social interventions around Education, Family Support etc, it is likely that problems that have festered for many years will improve gradually as the Regeneration Programme moves on and normality is implemented. Some increased stability has already been achieved in most of the areas over the last two years and many residents have indicated that. Crime levels have reduced and great credit is due to the intensive work of the Gardai, however we were coming from a very low baseline and there is a lot of work still needed and many of the deep rooted problems have not gone away.

It is clearly not a Gardai issue on its own, it needs a multi Agency approach with strong preventative as well as strong enforcement measures, as is outlined in the Regeneration Programme.

Q. How does the Programme of regeneration propose to link into and assist in the overall development of the City and the Region?

A. The overall success of the Regeneration Programme will be influenced strongly by City, Regional and National policies and strategies therefore we have been centrally involved in the City and County Development Plan Reviews, as well as the Regional Planning Guidelines and the Mid-West Area Strategy Plan (M.W.A.S.P). We also made a significant input into the Mid-West Task Force Interim Report on the Regional Economy following the Dell job losses.

Q. What needs to happen to continue the Regeneration momentum until regeneration is fully implemented?

A. We need movement on all three aspects of the Regeneration Programme i.e. Social, Economic, Physical.

Q. Is the challenge what you expected?

A. Yes, but we did not expect the Economic Situation to decline so much and so quickly.

Q. Given the current economic situation in the country, how long in your view, will the process of Regeneration take?

A. The Regeneration Programme sets out a ten year time line 2009-2018. It may now take longer. Some of the Social Issues will take a generation to tackle fully. But progress has been made already, and we need to continue that momentum.

Q. You raised the issue of young children previously and their involvement in low level anti-social behaviour on these estates. What has the Regeneration Agency done to try and address this issue? Is there a need to change or strengthen legalisation in this area?

A. This is a very serious issue, it has taken up much of our time and significant input from a wide range of people and organisations. The Childrens Services Committee in Limerick (chaired by H.S.E and involving the Regeneration Agencies) has, and is doing a lot of work on this issue e.g The Limerick Assessment of Needs (L.A.N.S) which is a proposed new system of identifying children most in need and ensuring that services can respond in a timely way.

There is a difficulty in relation to children under 12 that are involved in criminality or anti social behaviour, because the powers of the Gardai are very limited for this age group following on from the Childrens Act 2001. Where we believe legislative change is necessary and achievable we will lobby strongly for such change.

There is a strong and urgent need to provide early interventions for children, even, before they start going to school, and we will be working with Organisations like Barnardos to achieve that.

We are currently supporting the Incredible Years Programme which is a training programme around behaviour in primary schools that involves Teachers, Pupils and Parents. This is a multi Agency approach that includes the HSE, Education, Paul Partnership and Mary Immaculate College.

We are also promoting and supporting a number of other Educational initiatives, because Education is such a crucial aspect of Regeneration, and crucial to the futures of children in these Areas.

Q. How much funding overall has Regeneration brought into Limerick and how has it been spent ?

A . The Regeneration Agencies were set up in late June 2007 and since then over € 50 Million has been allocated by Government and expended on the Regeneration Programme in Limerick. Most of this funding has been allocated and paid directly by Government to the Local Authorities and utilized on dealing with the serious backlog of problems in these areas in particular the demolition of derelict Houses (over 400) and the provision of re-housing for families who were affected by the serious social and physical situation in these areas. This work is a crucial prerequisite to the start of the Regeneration Programme as set out in the Vision and Masterplan.

In 2009 some of this funding was also allocated to Clare County Council and Limerick County Council to enable them to respond in a reasonable way to Housing needs in the City.

Out of this total Regeneration funding (since 2007) a sum of € 15.5 Million was allocated directly to the Regeneration Agencies

SUMMARY OF FUNDING FOR REGENERATION AGENCIES

2007	€ 1.130 million
2008	€ 6.105 million
2009	<u>€ 8.250 million</u>
Total -	€ 15.485 million

This funding has been expended on :

Social interventions in the four Regeneration areas.

Small capital type works such as play and community facilities, CCTV systems and security measures in the four Regeneration areas.

Feasibility, Planning, Design, Research and Business studies.

Training and Enterprise initiatives .

Q. What aspects of the Regeneration Programme do you think could be started/accelerated if additional funding was made available to the Agency?

A. There are many aspects of the proposed Programme that could get accelerated, particularly construction, if additional funding could be made available. But we are very conscious of the current serious pressure on Government Funds and we must work with what we get.

Q. You have met with Local and National Politicians on a number of occasions. What have you requested of them and generally have you received their support for this programme?

A. Acceleration of the Programme now, is what we request, and yes we have received strong support.

Q. Many good families are moving away from these estates for a variety of reasons, and this cannot be healthy for your Regeneration Programme. What can be done to convince families to stay and form strong communities as part of the Programme going forward?

A. We think that some visible development on all fronts would be the best way to convince people and give them confidence that Regeneration will happen. Regeneration will happen. It has to happen.

It is very important to have a strong vision and a strong plan, the Limerick Regeneration Programme 2009-2018 has all this. It is very important to retain that vision and plan, even if it takes longer to achieve.

The plan may well change in some respects, as indicated when it was unveiled last year, and the current Economic situation will inevitably bring change, which may delay some of the bigger proposals but we must all strive to progress the key fundamentals of the plan including the following :

Tackling the Social problems

Quality and new/remodelled housing for residents in their existing community

Opening up of the Estates

Improving access to, and retention within Educational system

Better facilities, better services

Enhanced family and child support

Changing the Social mix

Better integration /co ordination and accountability from Public services.

Creation of jobs and training opportunities

Even in a time of Economic difficulties it is essential to have a strong and long term plan which is ready to speed up when the Economy inevitably improves. The Limerick Regeneration Programme is such a plan.

It is a document which brings together all plans and ambitions for the Regeneration areas, including the Public Sector, and particularly the objectives of the communities living there.

Many of these objectives are being implemented as we move forward, others will require more patience. It represents the best way of getting the radical solutions that are required to solve the very serious and indeed extreme problems that have beset some of these areas for the past 30 years.

To achieve its implementation, will require resilience, patience and unity.

Without full implementation a powerful opportunity could be lost for Limerick.

Q. There has been talk of the Cabinet endorsing the Limerick Regeneration Programme, why has this taken so long and what will this endorsement mean?

A. The Masterplan or Programme was unveiled in October 2008, it is a very comprehensive and integrated set of solutions which has major implications for a whole range of Government Departments as well as Regional and Local Agencies.

All these organisations needed time to consider these implications because as well as funding implications many of the solutions recommended would require significant change in how public services are delivered, co-ordinated and accounted for in the future.

It is crucial that that the Limerick Regeneration Project does not become simply a Housing project and be entirely reliant on one Government Department because as pointed out in the Fitzgerald report the transformation of these areas will be dependent also on Education, Health, Justice and Social Care issues.

The Limerick Regeneration process was initiated by a decision of Cabinet and we strongly believed that the solutions put forward by that process would require the approval of Cabinet for it to progress and to ensure that it continues to have integrated Government support.

We therefore were pleased when the Cabinet gave such endorsement to the Programme in the first week of December 2009 and are seeking first phase implementation proposals by the end of March 2010. ([click on news stories](#))

However, not getting this approval until now did not prevent progress and there has been strong support from all Government Departments since the Plan was unveiled but we do hope that this Cabinet Approval will be a key milestone in the project as we move into 2010.

December 2009