

Offaly Sports Partnership Annual Report

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Introduction

Offaly Sports Partnership was initiated in 2003 and received full designation from the Irish Sports Council in 2006. It is an inter agency group which is a sub structure of Offaly County Development Board and its core funding is received from the Irish Sports Council. The make up of the Partnership Board in 2008 was as follows: -



Patron - Matt Connor

Statutory Sector

Offaly County Council - Ann Dillon, Health Services Executive - Clodagh Armitage,
An Garda Síochana - Sgt Ollie Baker, Offaly VEC - Miriam O'Callaghan, FÁS - Séan O'Brien

Public Representatives - Cllr John Carroll and Cllr Percy Clendennen

Local and Rural Development Companies

OAK Partnership - Pat Leogue (Resigned), Tullamore Wider Options - Ann Starling,
Offaly Leader - John Moran, West Offaly Partnership - Pádraig Boland (Chairperson)

Disability Sector - Orla Dempsey (Replaced by Eimear Murphy)

Private Sector - Barry Keegan

Sports Sector

Athletics and Boxing - Georgina Tuohey, FAI - Karl Bond Snr, Camogie - Gráinne McIntyre,
GAA - Hughie Egan, Community Games - Jude Feehan

Third Level Sector - Joe Meegan

The Partnership employed three full time staff in 2008.



Three full time staff members of Offaly Sports Partnership in 2008 from left to right, Eamonn Henry Coordinator (post funded by Irish Sports Council); Olivia Murphy Administrator (post funded by Irish Sports Council);, Claire Grehan Sports Inclusion Disability Officer (post funded by Dormant Accounts).

Additionally student placement programmes were run in conjunction with the Athlone and Tralee Institutes of Technology. Emma Bunworth, a 4th year student of Sport and Leisure at Tralee Institute of Technology was on placement with the Partnership in 2008, while Trina McNicholas, a graduate of the Bachelor of Arts in Business Studies in Sports Management in Athlone Institute of Technology was on placement in OAK Partnership delivering one of the actions in the operational plan of Offaly Sports Partnership.

A further action of the Partnership which involved the training of sports tutors from within the Traveller community was coordinated by Claire Quinn. Tullamore Wider Options, a local development company, acted as employer for this project. Offaly Sports Partnership are incredibly grateful to Emma, Triona and Claire for their hard work and dedication during the year.



From left to right, Emma Bunworth, Triona McNicholas and Claire Quinn.

At the end of 2007, the Partnership concluded its strategic planning process. A three year strategic plan 2008 - 2010 went to print at the start of 2008. This plan was formally launched by the Chief Executive Officer of the Irish Sports Council, John Treacy on the 10th March 2008 in the Tullamore Court Hotel at a function attended by over one hundred people representing the Irish Sports Council, Offaly County Development Board, the Management Committee of the Sports Partnership, local councillors, Oireachtas members, staff of Offaly County Council, representatives of National Governing Bodies of Sport, schools, clubs and other interested parties.

The plan set out four strategic goals: -



1. Promoting inclusion (to increase the level of participation in sport by targeted low participation groups);
2. Building capacity (to build the capacity of sports clubs, schools and communities to deliver high quality sporting experiences);
3. Sustainable infrastructure (to support the development of sustainable sports facilities in the county);
4. Developing partnership (to develop a partnership approach to sports development in the county).

This report will give an overview of work completed in 2008 under each of the strategic goals.

Strategic Goal 1: Promoting Inclusion

Offaly Sports Partnership is committed to the ideal of sport for all and believes that people of all ages, abilities, needs and interests have the right to partake in sport. In achieving this goal, the Partnership identified six low participation groups in the county for targeted support. The identified groups are: -



1. People with a disability;



2. Travellers;



3. Migrant communities;



4. Older people;



5. Disadvantaged young people;



6. Women.

Progress in reaching out to these groups is detailed on the following pages: -



1. People with a Disability

Claire Grehan commenced work as the Sports Inclusion Disability Officer in March. In her short time with the Partnership, Claire has made huge progress in bringing sport and physical activity programmes to people with physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities. She has also formed very positive working relationships with a number of disability organisations including Down Syndrome Ireland, the Irish Wheelchair Association, the National Learning Network, Rehab Care, special education schools and Special Olympics Ireland. Among the activities organised and delivered, or jointly planned and delivered were: -

- Three "come try days" for children with disabilities, the National Learning Network and Down Syndrome Ireland;
- A kit fit programme for people with intellectual disabilities in Rehab Care;
- A Boccia programme with the National Learning Network, Rehab Care and the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary Services;
- A Lawn Bowls programme with the Peter Bradley Foundation and Rehab Care;
- A summer athletics programme in conjunction with the Irish Wheelchair Association, Sport
- ASA Helper's Certificate (swimming for people with disabilities);
- A Transition Year Disability Awareness Programme;
- Power Soccer for users of power wheelchairs with limited mobility.

To date a total of 158 people with disabilities have been reached by Claire. Claire is one of 20 Sports Inclusion Disability Officers in Ireland funded from the Dormant Accounts, and is a member of the national network of Sports Inclusion Disability Officers. Funding for her post has been secured up until March 2010.

Offaly Sports Partnership in conjunction with the Offaly Centre for Independent Living have submitted a proposal under the Community Services Programme 2008 designed to create sustainable structures for the continued delivery of sport and physical activity programmes to people with disabilities in the county. Updates on the progress of this project will be made in future reports. Neither Pobal nor the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs have advised formally as to the current status of this proposal.





2. Travellers in Sport

The two people that were instrumental in progressing the Travellers in Sport programme were training coordinator, Claire Quinn (top left), and Martin Kennedy (top right) who developed the three year business plan and wrote the independent evaluation of the training programme.



Offaly Sports Partnership established a Travellers in Sport working group in 2007 with the remit of developing actions and strategies to increase Traveller participation in sport and physical activity. This group established a two pronged strategy of: -

1. Developing a training programme to equip a number of Travellers with the skills to deliver peer led sports and physical activity programmes to the wider community of Travellers in the county;
2. Securing funding, possibly through a labour market scheme to employ a number of the aforementioned trainees to deliver the activity programmes to other Travellers;

The following was achieved in 2008: -

1. Funding was secured from Pobal by Tullamore Wider Options on behalf of the working group to develop a three year business plan under the community Services Programme. Consultations were conducted by Martin Kennedy with a large cross section of Travellers in the county and a business plan was submitted to Pobal in November. A Principal Secretary at the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs has informed Tullamore Wider Options that a meeting will be convened to discuss this plan further;
2. With support from the Traveller Health unit of the Health Services Executive, the Irish Sports Council, Tullamore Wider Options and Offaly VEC, a training of tutors programme was delivered. This programme was coordinated by Claire Quinn and covered five FETAC modules and nine sports specific and holistic health courses.



L - Members of the Travellers in Sport programme officiating at the sports hall athletics competition in December 2008

R - Members of the Travellers in Sport programme presenting Claire Quinn with a parting gift



3. Migrants in Sport

As a result of funding received from the Department of Justice in 2007 as part of the National Action Plan Against Racism, the Partnership continued to roll out a number of programmes to support migrant participation in sport in 2008. Activities in 2008 included a Midlands Volleyball Tournament in conjunction with the Volleyball Association of Ireland with 12 teams participating; a sports hall athletics programme in the towns of Tullamore and Edenderry with over 200 children participating (approximately 70:30 ratio), the participation of migrants as guests in the County's Senior Track and Field Championships, the hosting of our annual international games festival in the sports of basketball, volleyball and soccer in July with teams from Edenderry, Tullamore, Banagher and Birr participating, and a 12 bout intercultural boxing competition for juveniles in October 2008 in conjunction with the Offaly Boxing County Board. This latter tournament was attended by Olympic Silver Medallist Kenny Egan, and attracted huge local publicity. An independent evaluation of the project has been received, and the recommendations are currently being considered.



Action from various migrant in sport programmes in 2008



4. Older People in Sport

Go for Life activities were coordinated by Olivia Murphy, Administrator, Offaly Sports Partnership. The range of activities delivered included: -

1. Go for Life information sessions;
2. Go for Life taster sessions;
3. Go for Life refresher training;
4. Go for Life forum.

A number of other initiatives were also delivered during the course of 2008. These included the establishment of an Older Men in Sport working group, with a series of consultation days taking place. During the consultation days, the older men had the opportunity to try out some new activities including Boccia, Gym machines, Kurling and Pitchy. Frank Fahey of Fizzical, Martina Mullin of Go for Life and members of the Older Men in Sport working group helped to facilitate a number of discussions on the barriers to older men participating in sport, the importance of physical activity for older men, and also assisted in the development of a winter Boccia programme for older men.



Action from various older people in sport activities - Older men in sport; Go for Life sessions

5. Disadvantaged Youth

Direct involvement in projects targeting disadvantaged young people were confined to a Women in Sport initiative outlined further on, and the establishment of linkages between the Foróige sponsored Big Brother Big Sister project and the Volleyball Association of Ireland for the local introduction of Spikeball.

The Partnership's main response to disadvantaged young people in 2008 was to monitor the impact being made from Dormant Accounts funding approved in 2007. Five major projects had been approved from the available fund of €33,000, and the impact of these has been very positive.

Participation in Ladies Football in Tullamore, and Camogie across the county has increased as a result of the grants received. The County Development Committee for Camogie has been able to take the sport into all but one mixed / all girls post primary school in Offaly.

Participation in boxing in Cloghan has increased from 20 to over 45, including 10 female members and one female coach. This club has a high membership of Travellers and children from disadvantaged areas. Currently volunteers with this club are committing up to 10 hours a week with the members.

Kick boxing, which was introduced in Crinkle as a result of the grant continues to thrive. The Sport and Recreation Committee has recently been approved for three year Community Services Programme funding towards the caretaking and maintenance of the Centre.

The continued promotion of sporting opportunities has been become central to the Acorn Garda Youth Diversion project in Edenderry.



Big Brother Big Sister Spikeball

6. Women in Sport



A number of women in sport circuit training programmes carried over from 2007 took place in various clubs and locations throughout the county - Lusmagh, Tullamore and Gracefield. At least one of these programmes continued with the support of Cúl le Chéile, a Community Development Project based in Portarlington in 2008.

Additional women in sport programmes were also delivered to Traveller women and Disadvantaged teenage girls. A women in sport Basketball programme was delivered to 27 girls of secondary school age who left mainstream education early and enrolled in youth training centres (Clara Youthreach, Edenderry Youthreach and Tullamore Community Training Workshop). This six week basketball programme culminated in a blitz in St Mary's Youth Centre, Tullamore at the start of 2009. What was an excellent programme was unfortunately marred by a street brawl outside the Centre. Despite this unfortunate occurrence, the Partnership hopes to further develop this programme in the future.



Action from the Women in sport basketball programme in Clara

A women in sport Boccia programme was also delivered to 36 Traveller women from the Birr and Tullamore Traveller Training Centres. Like the six week basketball programme, this culminated in a blitz in St Mary's Youth Centre, Tullamore in December 2008. As a result of the success of this programme, further queries were received from the training centres as to the continued roll out of the programme. The Partnership envisages that the centres will continue to deliver the programme in the future with the assistance of the physical activity tutors trained up under the Travellers in Sport programme.



Action from Women in Sport boccia programme in Tullamore and Birr

Strategic Goal 2: Building Capacity

Offaly Sports Partnership recognises that sports clubs, schools and communities, and especially volunteers in each of these areas have a major role to play in the future development of sport in the county. In working to build the capacity of the sports sector in the county, the work of the Partnership in 2008 has focused on:-

1. Research into fitness levels of children;
2. Support of school based activities;
3. Developing and delivering collaborative projects with National Governing Bodies;
4. Offering coach / volunteer education and training programmes;
5. Operating a club development grant scheme;
6. Advancing plans to increase investment in sport in the county.

The continuation of the student placement programmes in conjunction with the Athlone and Tralee Institutes of Technology were critical to the success of the first three areas of work referred to above. The following pages present an overview of each of these areas of work.



1. Research into fitness levels of children

Emma Bunworth, a fourth year student of Sport and Leisure at Tralee Institute of Technology undertook a comprehensive fitness assessment of children in eighteen schools in Offaly. A total of 727 students were tested using the agility challenge of IFTA (International Fun in Team Athletics). Of seven possible awards / rankings that could be achieved (gold, silver, bronze, blue, green, yellow and orange), over 75% of the pupils at age nine ranked in the lowest two.

Emma has also carried out a comparable study in Kerry as part of her final year thesis to compare the performance of children in both counties. Initial findings from Kerry seem to suggest that there is no significant difference in the motor skills of children in both counties.

Emma presented her findings to the Board of Offaly Sports Partnership and has contacted each participating school to indicate how the school and each individual pupil performed. It is hoped that as a body of comparable information on fitness norms both inside and outside of Ireland emerges, appropriate responses to improve fundamental sports and motor skills will be developed. The information collected has been used in preparing an application to Social Entrepreneurs Ireland for a former Olympian to work in partnership with Offaly Sports Partnership for two years to address the problems identified.

Offaly Sports Partnership is very grateful to Emma for this comprehensive piece of work. We are also grateful to the eighteen schools and 727 pupils that participated.

2. School based activities

Through the student placement programme, Offaly Sports Partnership offered support to nineteen primary schools on aspects of the physical education curriculum which the individual schools felt needed to be strengthened. The main activities supported on the programme were athletics, basketball, gymnastics, dance, orienteering and innovative games.

The Partnership also continued to deliver the Buntús programme of the Irish Sports Council to primary schools in the county. Two special education schools (Ballinamere National School and St Joseph's Special School) were reached before the summer holidays, while six additional schools (High Street Mixed National School, Scoil Mhuire Girls National School, Scoil Mhuire Cúl an Áirne, Scoil Naomh Proinsais Naofa, St Mary's National School and Scoil Naomh Brogain) were also reached. This brings the total number of schools reached to date to 55



*Action from
Buntús training in
Edenderry*

The roll out of sports specific programmes (i.e. soccer and badminton) commenced in September 2008. Five schools (St Joseph's National School, Ceann Eitigh, Scoil Naomh Mhuire Naofa, St Brendan's Boys National School and Mucklagh National School) were reached with these programmes in 2008.



*Action from
Buntús soccer
training in
Birr*

In addition, the school structure was used for the pre season cross country and sports hall athletics programmes referred to in the next section. The table on the next page shows the schools in the county that received an intervention from Offaly Sports Partnership in 2008. The research intervention is not included in this table in order to protect confidentiality.

School	Buntús generic	Buntús sports specific	Enhanced PE	Pre season cross country	Sports hall athletics
Mucklagh		X			
St Joseph's, Arden View		X	X		
Pullough		X	X		
High Street	X				
Scoil Mhuire	X				
St Mary's, Cloghan	X		X		
St Cormac's	X			X	
Scoil Mhuire, Coolanarney	X				
St Broughan's	X				
Monasterois	X				X
Shinrone			X	X	X
Scoil Mhuire, Cloneygowan			X	X	X
Coolderry				X	X
Daingean					X
Scoil Bríde, Croghan			X	X	X
Geashill				X	X
Birr				X	
Ballybryan			X	X	
Cappagh				X	
St Mary's, Edenderry				X	
St Brendan's, Birr		X	X	X	
Kinnitty		X	X		
Offaly Special School of Education	X				
Ballinamere Special School of Education	X				
Scoil Mhuire, Kilcruttin			X		
Gaelscoil an Eiscir Riada, Tullamore			X		

School	Buntús generic	Buntús sports specific	Enhanced PE	Pre season cross country	Sports hall athletics
Lumcloon			X		
Clonmacnoise			X		
St Francis, Clara			X	X	
Presentation Girls, Portarlinton			X		
Portarlinton Boys			X		
Rahan			X		
Horseleap			X		
Roscomeroe			X		
Ferbane				X	
Rashina			X		

Schools receiving interventions form Offaly Sports Partnership in 2008

3. Collaborative projects with National Governing Bodies

The Partnership was involved with two projects in 2008 involving two governing bodies of Sport working collaboratively. The first project involved the promotion of Tag and Mini Rugby through the local Community Games structures. The Partnership facilitated the coming together of Offaly Community Games and the Regional Development Officers for the Leinster and Connaught branches of the Irish Rugby Football Union. Rugby training was out reached to ten Community Games areas with over four hundred children (boys and girls) participating in the project. Each Community Games area was provided with a rugby training kit by the provinces, and at least two of the Community Games areas will continue the playing of tag rugby. This programme was quite successful, though there was some friction between the two provinces in defining their respective areas of operation.

The Partnership is open to exploring whether the Community Games programme of activities and its grass roots structures can continue to be used as a mechanism for the promotion of minority sports.

The second collaborative project was a pre season cross country and summer fitness programme delivered in conjunction with Athletics Ireland's Regional Development Officer, Athletics Offaly, Offaly GAA, Athlone and Tralee Institutes of Technology, OAK Partnership and the Edenderry Community Development Project. The project was delivered in twelve GAA fields across the county and over 300 children participated on the programme. This programme was later outreached to primary schools in September.

This project was led out by two students on placement, Emma Bunworth (left) and Trina McNicholas (right); with three GAA coaches supporting them in the delivery of this project. Weather conditions and summer holiday interruptions proved problematic; however this project represents a small first step in starting a process of rejuvenating juvenile athletics. As a result of this project, over 700 children participated in the county inter schools championships (up from approximately 400 in previous years). 99 participants transferred to the inter club championships of Athletics Offaly and one new club was established in Birr.



Sports Hall Athletics

As a follow on to the cross country programme, and in response to Emma Bunworth's research findings into the motor skills of children, a programme of sports hall athletics was piloted in seven locations in the county (Monasterois National School, Croghan National School, Daingean National School, Daingean After Schools Homework Club, Geashill National School, Cloneygowan National School, Shinrone National School and Coolderry National School). The programme culminated in December with the first ever Inter Schools Sports Hall Athletics Competition to be staged in Offaly or the Republic of Ireland. Six schools and over 300 pupils participated in the competition which received excellent media coverage



Action from the sports hall athletics competition in December - top left obstacle relay, top right standing triple jump; bottom left chest push; and presentation to Triona McNicholas by Padraig Boland (Chairperson) and Claire Grehan (Sports Inclusion Disability Officer), Offaly Sports Partnership

It also resulted in an invitation to the Partnership from the Amateur Athletics Association in the United Kingdom to view other innovative programmes that it is conducting with the possibility of staging remote games in the future across nations. By accident rather than design, this pilot will open up a number of possibilities in the future for improving children's fitness, developing appropriate competition and addressing the gender imbalance for extra curricular sporting opportunities in a school environment.

In addition to joint collaborative workings between bodies, Offaly Sports Partnership has also collaborated with the Football Association of Ireland, the Volleyball Association of Ireland, Basketball Ireland and Athletics Ireland in the delivery of its migrants in sport programme.

4. Coach / Volunteer education and training

This year, seven new schools availed of training for the Buntús Generic programme, five schools availed of training in Buntús Soccer, and five schools availed of training in Buntús Badminton. 12 childcare centres also availed of training in Buntús Start.



Action from Buntús training



Under our coach / volunteer education training programme; 54 attended Code of Ethics training, 14 attended First Aid training, 24 attended Heart saver AED training; 25 attended the Lucozade Sports Education programme, and 17 attended a presentation on the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism's Sports Capital Grant Scheme.



Heart saver AED training

Under our Travellers in Sport programme, seven trainees received FETAC and sports specific awards.



Finally, under our programme for older people, 88 older people attended Get Active presentations, and 25 older men attended consultation days on older men in sport and participated in the winter Boccia programme.

5. Club Development Grant Scheme

Nineteen grants totaling € 15,000 were distributed to clubs under our Club Development Grant Scheme 2008. The following were the nineteen beneficiaries: -

Club Name	Amount	Club Name	Amount
Birr Camogie Club	€900.00	Monasterois Table Tennis Club	600
St Broughan's Boxing Club	€650.00	St Brendan's Athletics Club	€600.00
Lusmagh Camogie Club	€800.00	Silver Seals Swimming Club	€600.00
Killeigh Schoolboys / Schoolgirls Soccer Club	€900.00	Cloncollig Celtic Schoolboys / Schoolgirls Soccer Club	€800.00
Country Club Badminton	€650.00	Birr Community Games	€650.00
Tullamore Canoe Club	€1,000.00	Kinnitty Camogie Club	€1,000.00
Ballinamere Special Olympics Club	€800.00	St Sinchill's Camogie Club	€800.00
West Offaly Lions Rugby Club	€650.00	Doon GAA Club	€900.00
Tullamore Hockey Club	€900.00	Offaly Rowing Club	€1,000.00
Birr Minor GAA Club	€800.00	Total	€15,000.00



Some of the recipients of Club Development Grants 2008 - left Killeigh Schoolboys / Schoolgirls Soccer Club, and right Ballinamere Special Olympics Club

6. Investment in Sport

Offaly Sports Partnership established an Investment in Sport working group in 2008, with the remit of establishing whether adequate funding could be secured to employ a dedicated Sports Development Officer for the county, and additional programme funding to go with the role. The group made substantial progress up to the summer of 2008. However following a national directive for statutory bodies to reduce payroll costs, it was not possible to secure financial commitments from the three key statutory bodies. It was decided to disband the group for the moment but to prepare an outline proposal in the event that funding opportunities would arise in the future.

Using the local findings from Emma Bunworth's research, a former Olympian with a Bachelor of Arts in Sports Management has submitted an application to Social Entrepreneurs Ireland to address the poor motor skills of children in the county. The application was supported by Offaly Sports Partnership, and if successful will result in two year funding up to a maximum of €80,000. The outcome of this application should be known in June 2009.

Strategic Goal 3: Sustainable Infrastructure

Offaly Sports Partnership believes that forward planning for sports facilities should aim to marry the twin issues of inclusion and sustainability in order that optimum usage is achieved. The Partnership is also further committed to supporting the sports sector to maximise investment to the county under the Sports Capital Programme.

As in previous years, Offaly Sports Partnership delivered a planning workshop at the end of 2007 in advance of the Department's call for applications. The Partnership circulated the criteria and application forms, and provided advice, assistance and letters of support to individual clubs as necessary. The Partnership also continued to monitor changes in the programme criteria and advised clubs on their implications. In addition, the Partnership also monitors the performance of the county relative to other counties each year. In 2008, the total grants approved under the programme fell from the 2007 high of €85m to €50.25m. Approvals for Offaly were down from €2m to €1.265m. The county however ranked third in terms of per capita allocations for the second year in a row. A presentation on the county's performance in securing capital funding was made to the Board of the Partnership, and it was agreed to form a facilities working group as a result. This group will be convened when an audit of sports facilities in the county has been completed.

County	Lottery allocation (€)	Per capita allowance (€)	% National average
Limerick	€4,683,000.00	€25.44	221.47
Tipperary	€3,281,000.00	€21.98	191.36
Offaly	€1,265,000.00	€17.85	155.37
Monaghan	€933,635.00	€16.67	142.13
Westmeath	€1,317,000.00	€16.60	144.48
Waterford	€1,544,000.00	€14.30	124.49
Clare	€1,562,000.00	€14.08	122.54
Donegal	€1,926,000.00	€13.08	113.84
Louth	€1,433,000.00	€12.88	112.1
Laois	€799,000.00	€11.91	103.71
Meath	€1,938,000.00	€11.90	103.6
Dublin	€13,840,865.00	€11.66	101.48
Longford	€397,000.00	€11.54	100.48
Mayo	€1,380,500.00	€11.15	97.03
Cork	€4,485,000.00	€9.32	81.11
Sligo	€555,000.00	€9.11	79.33
Cavan	€576,000.00	€9.00	78.34
Kilkenny	€780,000.00	€8.91	77.54
Kerry	€1,223,000.00	€8.75	76.13
Wicklow	€1,103,000.00	€8.74	76.08
Wexford	€1,133,500.00	€8.60	74.89
Galway	€1,722,500.00	€7.44	64.72
Carlow	€366,500.00	€7.28	63.36
Kildare	€1,336,500.00	€7.10	62.43
Roscommon	€409,000.00	€6.96	60.58
Leitrim	€260,000.00	€1.59	13.88
Total	€50,250,000.00	€11.49	100

The successful applicants for Offaly were: -



Club name	Amount
Offaly GAA County Board, O'Connor Park	€500,000.00
Clara GAA Club	€150,000.00
Banagher United Soccer Club	€80,000.00
Irish Parachute Club Ltd	€80,000.00
St Rynagh's Hurling Club	€80,000.00
Coolderry GAA Club	€65,000.00
St Brigid's GAA Club	€60,000.00
Tullamore Rugby Club	€60,000.00
Bracknagh GAA Club	€55,000.00
Shinrone Development Ltd	€45,000.00
Killurin GAA Club	€40,000.00
Tubber GAA Club	€25,000.00
Walsh Island GAA Club	€25,000.00
Total	€1,265,000.00

Offaly Sports Partnership in conjunction with the Community Forum made plans to take the information workshops to the four electoral areas. The first of these was held in Coolderry in October 2008. However when it emerged that new funding for sports capital projects might not be available in 2009, the remaining workshops were cancelled.

The Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government in conjunction with the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism has asked all local authorities to conduct audits of community, arts and sports facilities in their respective counties. Offaly Sports Partnership is working closely with the Community and Enterprise section of Offaly County Council to ensure that the sports facilities audit is as comprehensive as possible.

Strategic Goal 4: Developing Partnership

Offaly Sports Partnership are confident that increased cooperation between the key providers and stakeholders in sport will enhance sports provision and raise levels of participation in sport into the future. The Strategic Plan has set four key objectives on how partnership working can be enhanced, specifically in the areas of: -

1. The identity of Offaly Sports Partnership;
2. Coordination and collaboration between key provider agencies in the county;
3. Communications;
4. Effective structures.

1. Promoting the identity of Offaly Sports Partnership

The identity of the Partnership has been promoted through: -

- The launch of the Strategic Plan on the 10th March 2008;
- Presentations made to three county boards in Offaly (Offaly Badminton, Offaly Ladies Football County Board and Athletics Offaly);
- Communications issued to stakeholders (e.g. newsletters, correspondence , etc).

2. Coordination and collaboration

As already highlighted in this report, there has been effective collaboration between governing bodies of sport promoting programmes of mutual benefit. Coordination among partners has commenced through the working groups established by the Partnership (see section 4, structures). It is the aim of the Offaly Sports Partnership to ensure that there is a greater level of coordination with stakeholders when developing the annual operating plans of the Partnership in the future

3. Communications

The Partnership website (www.offalysports.ie) went live in 2008 and a radio campaign (Radio Active) was developed in conjunction with Laois and Westmeath Sports Partnerships, and Midlands 103fm. The Partnership also produced a quarterly newsletter which was sent out to all stakeholders and other interested parties.

4. Effective structures

To oversee and support the growing workload of Offaly Sports Partnership, the following substructures were put in place: -

- Offaly Sports Partnership Executive Committee;
- Three working groups referred to previously in this report (Travellers in Sport, Investment in Sport and Older Men in Sport).

The Women in Sport working group, the Sports Ability Forum and the Facilities working group are to be convened in 2009.

In addition to sub structures, the Partnership Administrator, Olivia Murphy ensured that financial analysis structures are in line with the reporting requirements of our various funders. A comprehensive review of our financial system is currently under way.

Conclusion

2008 was quite a successful year. This was largely due to: -

- The appointment of an effective staff team (including the students on placement) to support the delivery of an increased workload;
- The completion and launch of our Strategic Plan 2008 - 2010 which has given focus to the work of the Partnership;
- The commitment of members of the Board, those participating on sub structures of the Partnership, and other stakeholders with whom we have positively collaborated;
- The ongoing support of the Irish Sports Council and colleagues from other counties;
- The various programme funders (Irish Sports Council, Dormant Accounts, Pobal, Offaly County Council, National Action Plan Against Racism, Health Services Executive, Tullamore Wider Options, OAK Partnership and Edenderry Community Development Project).

We did encounter some delays with a couple of programmes; nonetheless we feel a positive start has been made in a number of areas.

We are facing into a much more difficult climate in 2009 and beyond. Securing local and national funding will become more difficult and we have to keep the 50% match funding requirement of the Irish Sports Council to the fore. This task will be difficult but we need to continue to pursue such investment for increased participation in sports; for target groups; the general population; and the sports sector. Our approach needs to be one of ongoing proactive advanced forward planning. This makes effective partnership working all the more critical.

