

# Case Study - Community Facilities Initiative 2010

## Introduction

Under the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013, Ballyhoura Development Ltd. is offering a programme of practical supports to communities to enable them to develop quality and sustainable Community facilities throughout the Ballyhoura area. The initiative includes a range of supports including training, technical support and capital support to guide communities through the community and facility needs analysis, project planning, and refurbishment/construction of facilities. The initiative pays particular attention to the longer planned use and sustainability of buildings from an environmental and maintenance cost of operation.

## Principles Used (process & approach)

The approach is staged and multi-faceted and includes a number of elements, which, as a whole, aim to provide community groups with a comprehensive knowledge base, which will enable the development of appropriate, quality community facilities.

In May and June 2010, Ballyhoura Development Ltd produced an action research project entitled the **“Community Facility Energy and Health & Safety Support Programme”** focusing on five community-managed buildings. The aim of this research was to identify various cost-effective and energy saving measures, including biomass boiler viability, as well as improvements to the facilities’ health & safety to ensure best value back to the community in the long term.

The learning gained from the work done on the facilities, including dedicated technical reports, will help inform other groups and facility managers when considering development projects. The outcomes will be presented at two themed workshops, “Energy Management, Efficiency and Sustainability for Community Facilities” and “Health & Safety in Community Facilities” in July 2010.

In July 2010, Ballyhoura Development Ltd is facilitating a **study visit to examples of best practice** in community facility development, which will be an opportunity for the visiting groups to engage members of management committees on relevant practical issues such as initial project development and ongoing facility operations and management, financing, promotion and marketing etc.

An **accessible project development guide** is also being developed to assist communities with the early stages of developing community facility projects up to when the professional assistance of architects/engineers are required.

A **workshop will be held in Autumn 2010** for interested communities and management committees offering the relevant professional advice and information relating to work done earlier in the year and guest speakers on relevant community facility development projects.

Information gained from **ongoing support and cluster workshops** of Ballyhoura Development staff with community facility management groups will also help identify the levels of professional project development training required, which will later form part of a **dedicated community training programme** focusing on Project Management and the Operation of Community Facilities under this initiative.

### **Key Impacts on the ground**

By providing and facilitating the appropriate supports to communities, through this initiative, Community Facility projects will be developed through the promotion of best practice and sustainable development, as follows:

- Assisting community groups with Needs Analysis to identify current community based uses of the facility and possible future uses.
- Knowledge - through research undertaken by professionals to enable communities to recognise the importance of health and safety, alternative heating sources and energy efficiency when considering development work, thereby creating facilities that use less energy, pollute less, create less waste and have a reduced contribution to climate change.
- Developing an accessible guide to developing community facilities and visiting examples of best practice will inform decisions of community groups and management committees with their projects.
- Training needs of management committees of community facilities will be identified and will be addressed through the provision of appropriate practical training and thereby improving financial viability and sustainability of community facilities in the area.
- Provision of financial support through the Rural Development Programme for technical expertise and capital works towards the development of quality community facilities in the Ballyhoura Development area.

### **Conclusions/Key Messages/Issues going forward**

In the initial roll out of the Rural Development Programme it became apparent that community groups were at various stages of knowledge and development with regard to community facility development. This initiative was designed to assist those in most need of professional support, so that learning appropriate to all groups could be collected and disseminated in a practical and accessible fashion.

The high level of interest and engagement from communities thus far suggests that this initiative is responding appropriately to a clear need amongst community members.

Dedicated training supports, available to all groups, will be of high importance to ensure that there is a solid base of volunteers empowered to continue the operations of community owned and managed facilities in the long term.