LOCAL AUTHORITY TIMES

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS 2019

ELECTION SPECIAL

VOTE

Inside: Dr Seán Ó'Riordáin gives us his take on the 2019 local elections and the road ahead for local government in Ireland.

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ARE WE THERE YET?

Dr Seán Ó'Riordáin, Chairman of the Public Policy Advisors Network

A look at the 2019 local election results, including the mayoral plebiscites, and what this means for local government in Ireland.

ELECTION SPECIAL

VOTE

Few other countries can claim to having, despite its many challenges, a local government system which has supported the idea of the democratic ballot paper being at the heart of governance and how local society functions. So what if anything are the elections telling us, what lessons may be had from this most recent iteration of local democracy and what, if anything do we need to do to make sure that we will continue to have a lively open democracy in another 120 years?

The turnout

Just about one in two voters decided to use their mandate to choose those that will set direction for all of our lives over the coming decades. At just over 50% this is a fall of almost 3% relative to the turnout[1] in 2014 which, at 52%, was itself a fall from the 2009 figures of 58%. So the trend downwards is a worry and needs to be examined to fully understand why this is the case, especially when compared to the much higher participation rates at national level. Is it a reflection of the limited importance the voter places on local government? Perhaps if people were voting for elected representatives who would set policy direction in areas such as education, social care

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and health, they might be more interested in choosing their democratic leaders at local level? Perhaps not. Without getting into detail those most impacted, on an area basis, by council services such as housing, seem to have seen even greater disinterest in the local elections than is generally the case with remarkably low levels of voting in some of the more disadvantaged urban communities in the State, communities where council services supply a very real need.

The participation level

With some 949 positions up for grabs over 1,980 people put themselves forward for election this year. For many it was their first entre into democratic politics although it seems many may have been encouraged through engagement with the referenda of the past three years along with, in fairness, a very real effort pretty much across all political parties to encourage new entrants into elective politics. Some 560 candidates (approx. 29%) were female, a solid increase on numbers in the 2014 election in which around 440 (approx. 22%) female candidates stood. Some parties were still nonetheless challenged to hit the 30% target expected this year. Also the numbers of women going independently were well behind the numbers of men. So much more effort is required to build up the participation rates for women and it is clear that building up the female participation rate will continue to require focus over the coming years.

In terms of getting elected while proportionally is was easier for a woman to get elected than a man this simply reflects the larger number of males willing to put themselves forward. Relative to the last local government election in 2014 the success of women in the election went from approx. 21% to almost 24%. Hardly inspiring. While one local authority, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown now has a balanced representation in council it is the only council that can make this claim. In other councils unfortunately there is much to do to enhance female representation (one council has a single female representative!) but at least all councils now have at least some minimum number of females. A lot done but much more to do to take an old political slogan!

The increased diversity of the population with up to 17% (and over 11% not holding Irish citizenship but all as residents allowed, if registered, to vote) being born outside Ireland has yet to make any significant difference to the make-up of our councils. But it is moving in the right direction. Some 53 candidates from outside Ireland put their names forward with 8 elected. So we do have our first black female councillor in County Meath and several other representatives who come from a diverse ethnic and faith background, something that is really welcome and provides a starting point in efforts to build a more representative

[1] A truly excellent web site to get the detail of the turnout is to be found at https://adriankavanaghelections.org/2019/05/28/the-2019-local-elections-a-geographers-overview/

spectrum of the people in today's multi-cultural Ireland. But again much remains to be done if the level of participation of our very diverse population is to be reflected in council membership.

Equally, representation of critical minority groups in Ireland remains a work in progress. Three female Travellers took the brave step to put themselves forward and while none were successful this time it does indicate that local elections are for all local citizens, regardless of background or belief.

The question that one might pose is whether there is more that could be done. In fairness successive governments and individual local authorities have invested in participation networks such as the Public Participation Networks, Traveller consultative fora, older people's councils, etc., and many are a great success in bringing different voices to the local policy table. Is there a case for building upon these as a possible pipeline for entry into local politics? Perhaps that might be too much to expect or maybe it might be worth exploring. In other countries there are platforms in the form of local community councils with invited membership operating under the umbrella of the local authority that could be a mechanism to open up the capability and capacity of diverse voices to get involved in local politics. In New Zealand the local government system has gone so far as to have invited members alongside elected members in their version of the municipal district in Ireland. Such members play an active role alongside their elected colleagues but do not enter into the role of the elected member in addressing representational functions as these are very much within the remit of the elected member.

An active pipeline of new blood is essential to sustaining the political part of the local government system just as an active and skilled inflow of new staff is essential to a vibrant and fundamentally important aspect to the public service at local level. No silver bullet answers but certainly in need of careful thought for the future of local government.

Electing the Mayor

There are several models of mayoral government across the globe, some very powerful people like Bill de Blasio in New York or Ann Hildago in Paris, other weaker mayoral positions such as the Mayor of London, and of course, the representative mayors chosen by their councils with, as in Ireland, yearly positions. No one type is necessarily

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better than the other if local and national political culture accepts the particular role. Increasingly, however, there is a sustained movement globally to having directly elected mayors. These mayors play a variety of roles, the most important of which, for many, is being at the bully pulpit and using the simple fact that as democratically elected mayor with the votes of the people behind him/her, local public services are expected to respond to the leadership of the bully pulpit. In part this is what the role of the mayor in London (and elsewhere in the UK with the mayors in the combined authorities playing a similar role) was initially as the position was established. As a result of the pulpit the history of the mayor of London and indeed Chicago that service responsibilities do migrate from the centre to the local but generally do so on an ad hoc basis.

Beyond the bully pulpit there are mayors with real substantive powers and executive responsibilities. Mayors from cities like Brisbane and Auckland to the Nordic States, Germany and across the United States including New York, San Francisco etc., all play substantive roles with powers and budgets across a wide range of public services including education, transport, healthcare, local policing, social care etc.

The attitude of an electorate voting for someone who will determine the quality of your child's education, your parents' social care, the access to employment, and utilities does tend to have an influence on citizens interest in mayoral elections and local government elections generally... but not always.

So in some respects the idea of an elected mayor with executive powers in Ireland should not have been a

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surprise. It was flagged up in earlier reform efforts, most notably in John Gormley's Green Paper and in Putting People First issued under Phil Hogan's watch.

However, it is arguable that the move in Ireland in this election to hold plebiscites on the matter was not as well developed as it might have been in terms of those in favour of having executive mayors in, for the moment, three of the cities of the State. The passing of the proposal in Limerick leaves the Minister, all other things being equal, with a two year period to advance plans for a directly elected mayor while the proposal has been rejected in both Cork City and Waterford. Meanwhile, in the case of Dublin we await proposals on the roll out of a citizens' assembly type framework to address local governance arrangements in the Dublin city region.

A case was made, certainly in the context of Cork, for a similar process and perhaps it may be worth re-visiting this as an idea in the near future, particularly once the re-configuration of Cork is fully in place. Should this be the case, however, a far more fundamental question, applicable to all the local authorities in Ireland, needs to be proposed for consideration and that is the question of just what is public service for and what is local government's role in public service. Frankly, simply transposing responsibilities from a chief executive to an elected mayor is not, given the considerable limitation of the role of local government in Ireland, going to make much difference. In similar circumstances, such as those of the English and US systems, politicians such as Ken Livingstone and Richard Daley in Chicago used their political weight within, in these cases, the UK Labour Party and the US Democratic Party, to bully national/state government to migrate responsibilities into local government. Is the national political framework in Ireland ready for a similar case?

As noted in other commentator's examinations of the roll out of executive mayors the biggest losers in the adoption of even limited bully pulpit mayoral models is that the centre, especially national parliamentarians, lose influence. In addition, national agencies lose responsibilities and in such circumstances introducing even the most basic of mayoral models requires, over time, considerable national and regional public service re-configuration. National departments move from being service delivery bodies to having solely a policy role, something foreshadowed in the

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Devlin Report of 1969 incidentally not to mention the later Barrington Report. Local authorities, and in some countries regional authorities, become the primary public service platform.

Such change needs careful consideration. Do we dispense, over time, with arms-length bodies such as the HSE, the IDA, the national providers of utilities, for example and leave it to, as in pretty much most other countries in the OECD, a single operating model otherwise known as the local authority? Scotland is thinking that this is the approach to take and no-one seems to be discussing the idea of having an elected mayor, certainly until the new model is well in place and public services from policing to healthcare are re-configured back into local government.

A role for a citizens' assembly?

Such issues are a very fundamental concern which requires careful consideration and partnership. It has been done before in countries like Finland and Denmark (several times in the case of Denmark). Just how acceptable would it be in Ireland? Well, perhaps here is an opportunity to build on one of the truly innovative examples of public management in Ireland, the Citizens' Assembly. How about a Citizens' Assembly looking at how our public service is structured and managed. Who is responsible for what, how to improve the input of the citizen, the local politician, and sustain a local-national policy relationship which is, despite its many challenges, one of the most efficient in the OECD? While in recent days some have called for a role for the Assembly, most notably the Green Party nationally and local politicians in both Waterford and Cork, it seems their thinking is simply limited to the actual role of a mayor as distinct from the wider and arguably more substantive need to overview all that is the public service in Ireland and just where local government stands within that hugely important arena.

Conclusion

As someone who has been around for nearly 40 years working in, studying, researching and writing about public service configuration in Ireland and elsewhere it has, funnily enough, come to my attention that local government is a critical platform for public service delivery. Local government is an essential feature of a vibrant and sustainable public service and political process, and provides the national policy framework with the practical

means to deliver public services which are accountable, transparent and consistent. It seems to me that in response to the question 'are we there yet?' the answer is a firm, no, but we might be at least moving! To where we are moving needs resolution which requires evidenced thinking on the nature of our public services and role of local government, political and professional.

Simply tinkering with the system at local level is no longer a worthwhile endeavor. If we are to meet the many challenges confronting the country a public service that is fit for purpose and configured to confront such challenges is required urgently. And given the implications of this it would be a good idea to start thinking about it sooner rather than later.

Local and European Elections 2019 –
A look at the numbers
How did the parties perform at local level?

Fianna Fáil held its place as the largest party in local government, while Fine Gael bucked the trend by gaining local seats while being in government. After their best local electoral performance to date in 2014, Sinn Féin fared the worst this time around. They returned just over half the seats they won in 2014 – from 160 down to 81. After a poor performance in 2014, Labour ran fewer candidates and, while their share of first preference votes was down by 1.5 per cent, they gained 6 seats.

The Green Party drew much of the media attention over the weekend. While the exit polls turned out to be overestimating their support somewhat, it was still a very good day at the office. The party gained 37 seats at the local level (up from just 12 seats in 2014 to 49 seats in 2019), and returned two members of parliament to the EU, with Ciaran Cuffe topping the poll in Dublin and Grace O'Sullivan taking a seat in Ireland South.

Two newly formed parties contested their first local elections: Social Democrats won 2.3% of the vote gaining 19 seats across 11 different local authority areas, while Aontú won 3 seats. Solidarity-People Before Profit lost 17 seats, returning just 11 councillors.

[2] See https://adriankavanaghelections.org/

Turnout
The declining turnout trend continues, only just remaining above half of the electorate at 50.2%. Turnout has been reported as lower than 30% in some urban areas.

Gender Balance
Maynooth University geographer, Dr Adrian Kavanagh,[2] reported that 559 women candidates stood for local government election this year, accounting for 28.2% of all candidates.

Of the 949 councillors elected, 225 (23.7%) are women. While this remains lower than the EU average, it is an improvement from 2014 when 196 (20.6%) female councillors were elected.

The highest ratio of male to female councillors is in Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown, with 21 men and 19 women. Longford County Council elected just one women out of 17 seats available. While gender quotas were introduced for general elections in 2016, they are not in place at the local level.

Recounts
Recounts and rechecks happened all over the country.

TABLE 1 – 2019 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION RESULTS BY PARTY AND LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA

	FF	FG	SF	Lab	Green	SD	S-PBP	I4C	Aontú	WP	WUA	KIA	Renua	IDP	Ind	Total
Donegal	12	6	10	1											8	37
Cavan	8	7	1						1						1	18
Monaghan	4	5	6												3	18
Galway County	15	11	1		1										11	39
Galway City	5	3		1	2	1									6	18
Mayo	11	12	1												6	30
Leitrim	6	6	2												4	18
Roscommon	6	2	1												9	18
Sligo	5	6	2			1	1								3	18
Louth	7	5	7	3	1										6	29
Meath	12	12	3	1		1			1						10	40
Longford	6	9													3	18
Westmeath	9	5		2	2										2	20
Offaly	8	4			1	1							1	1	3	19
Laois	6	7	2	1											3	19
Kildare	12	11	1	5	3	4									4	40
Kilkenny	11	9		2	1										1	24
Wicklow	7	9	2	2	2	1									9	32
Carlow	6	6	1	2				1							2	18
Wexford	12	9	2	2					1						8	34
Dublin City	11	9	8	8	10	5	2	1							9	63
Fingal	8	7	4	6	5	2	1	1							6	40
South Dublin	8	7	6	2	4	1	3								9	40
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	7	13		6	6	1	2								5	40
Clare	13	8	1		1										5	28
Limerick	12	14	2	3	2	1									6	40
Tipperary	9	12	2	1							1				15	40
Kerry	10	7	4	2								1			9	33
Cork County	18	20	2	2	2	1									10	55
Cork City	8	7	4	1	4		1			1					5	31
Waterford	7	7	6	4	2										6	32
Totals	279	255	81	57	49	19	11	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	187	949

FF: Fianna Fáil
FG: Fine Gael
SF: Sinn Féin
Lab: Labour
Green: Green Party
SD: Social Democrats
S-PBP: Solidarity-People Before Profit

I4C: Independents 4 Change
WP: Workers' Party
WUA: Workers & Unemployed Action Group
KIA: Kerry Independent Alliance
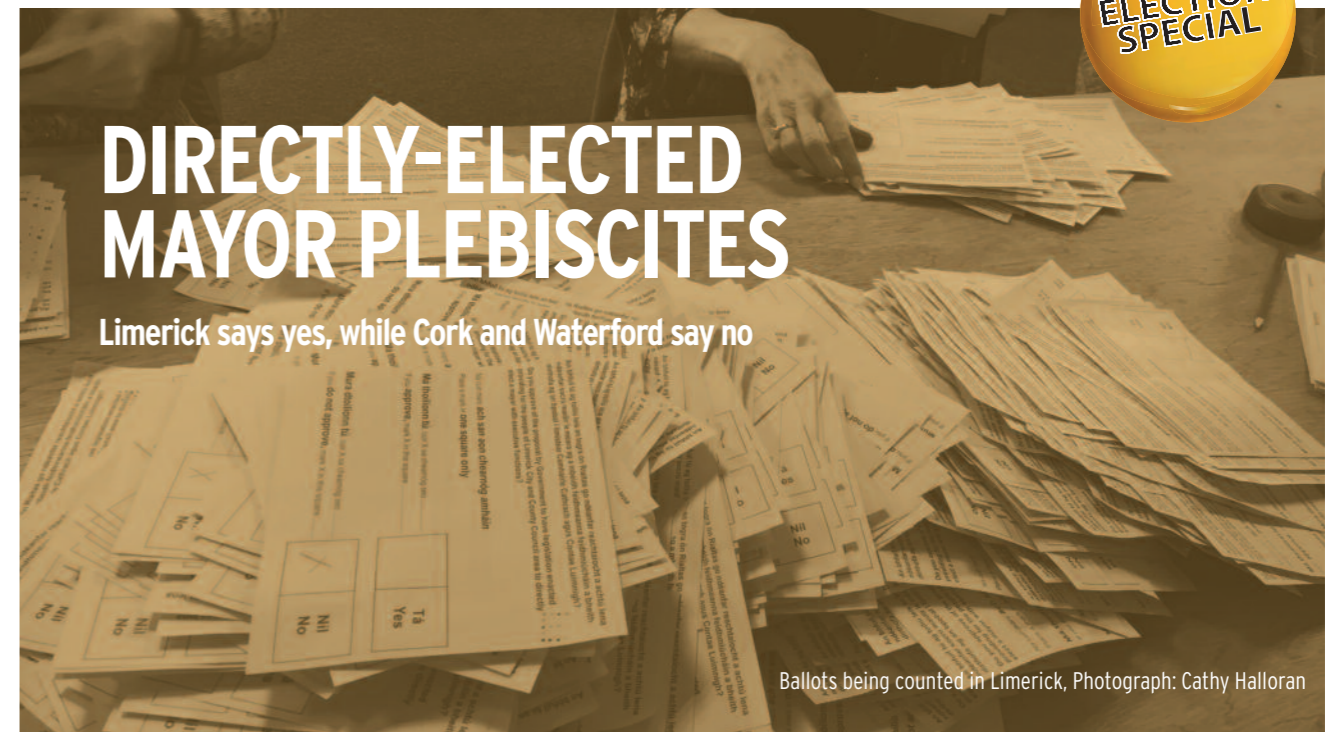**IDP:** Irish Democratic Party
Ind: Independents (Non-Party)

Two recounts were needed in Bantry West before Holly McKeever Cairns, first time candidate for the Social Democrats, took the final seat on Cork County Council. She edged out Independent Finbarr Harrington by just a single vote. This wasn't the only result decided by a single vote, however, with Anne Ferris (Labour) being elected to Wicklow County Council on the smallest of margins following a recount in Bray East.

Of course, most of the media attention around recounts was focused not on the local elections but on the European Parliament elections. A full recount for the Ireland South constituency was called for after four days, 18 counts, and 327 votes separating Sinn Féin's Liadh Ní Ríada, who faced elimination, and the Green Party's Grace O'Sullivan. The full recount began on Tuesday 4th June, however Ní Ríada withdrew from the race following a partial recount. The count was concluded on Wednesday 5th bringing to an end the local and European election counts for 2019. The full European election results are provided below.

EUROPEAN ELECTION PARTY RESULTS

Party	Share of first preference vote (%)	Change since 2014	Number of seats won (2019)
Fine Gael	29.6	+7.3	5
Fianna Fáil	16.5	-5.8	2
Sinn Féin	11.7	-7.8	1
Labour	3.1	-2.2	0
Solidarity-People Before Profit	2.3	-0.9	0
Green Party	11.4	+6.5	2
Social Democrats	1.2	+1.2	0
Independents 4 Change	7.4	+7.4	2
Independent	15.7	-4.1	1
Other	1.0	-1.5	0

Elected Candidates

Midlands-North-West
- Mairead McGuiness (Fine Gael)
- Luke 'Ming' Flanagan (Independent)
- Matt Carthy (Sinn Féin)
- Maria Walsh (Fine Gael)

Dublin
- Ciarán Cuffe (Green Party)
- Frances Fitzgerald (Fine Gael)
- Clare Daly (Independents 4 Change)
- Barry Andrews* (Fianna Fáil)

South
- Sean Kelly (Fine Gael)
- Billy Kelleher (Fianna Fáil)
- Mick Wallace (Independents 4 Change)
- Grace O'Sullivan (Green Party)
- Deirdre Clune* (Fine Gael)

*The final seats in the Dublin and the South constituency are the so called 'Brexit seats' which cannot be taken up until Britain leave the EU.

DIRECTLY-ELECTED MAYOR PLEBISCITES

Limerick says yes, while Cork and Waterford say no

Ballots being counted in Limerick, Photograph: Cathy Halloran

Limerick is set to become the first local authority in Ireland to have a directly-elected mayor (DEM) following plebiscites held on the same day as the local and European elections. While the plebiscites are not binding, the Minister of State with responsibility for Local Government, John Paul Phelan, confirmed to the Dáil that his department will proceed with preparing legislation to provide for a DEM in Limerick. He also noted that the issue will be revisited for Cork city and Waterford city and county in the near future. It has been proposed that a citizens' assembly will be convened to discuss the issue of a DEM in the Dublin region.

There was criticism of the level of information provided to the public prior to the three plebiscites. While an information campaign was launched in the areas a few weeks prior to polling day, it has been reported that voters were not widely aware of the plebiscite with many handing the ballot back at the polling stations.

This is not the first time that DEMs have been proposed in Ireland. Better Local Government, published in 1996, included proposals for DEMs. Legislation was in put in place to allow this in 2001, and repealed in 2003. More recently, in 2014, the proposal to hold a plebiscite around the introduction of a DEM for the Dublin region was vetoed by Fingal County Council. The council were concerned about the impact of a city-based mayor on the county and argued that there was not enough detail provided about the role and powers of the mayor.[1]

The model to be pursued in Limerick is a DEM with 'executive functions'. This means some functions currently carried out by the chief executive of the local authority will be transferred to the mayor. The executive mayor would have a similar relationship to the authority chief executive as a government minister has to a secretary general of a government department. A detailed policy proposal is available on the Department's website at:https://www.housing.gov.ie/local-government/governance/directly-elected-mayors-executive-functions

[1] Quinlivan, A. (2014). The election that wasn't: how the plan for a directly elected Dublin mayor could be revived. Irish Times, 24th May 2014.

DIRECTLY-ELECTED MAYORS – RESULTS OF DIRECTLY-ELECTED MAYOR PLEBISCITES

| Local authority	Votes for	Votes against	Result
Cork City	34,347	33,364	Rejected by 983 votes
Limerick City and County	38,122	34,573	Accepted by 3,549 votes
Waterford City and County	22,437	21,718	Rejected by 719 votes

VOTE SMART!

Voting Advice Applications and the Future of Democracy in Ireland
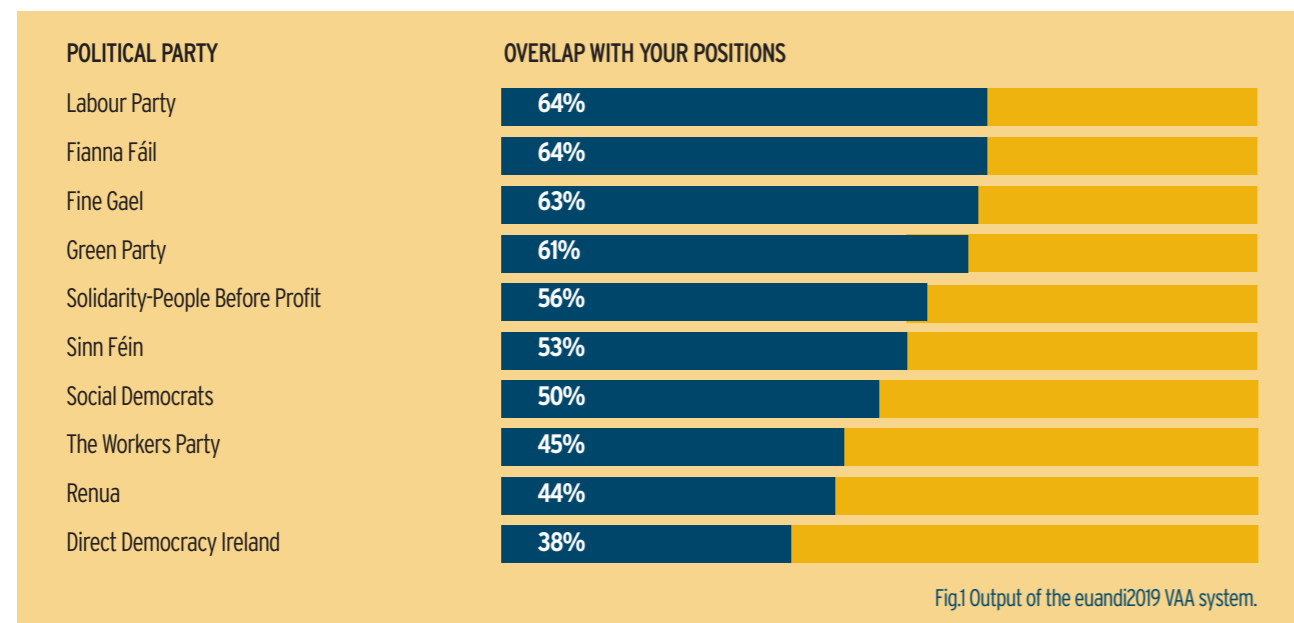
Shauna Kearney, IPA

The 2019 Local elections took place on May 24. The most notable trend was not that of the 'green wave' across the country, but voter turnout, or lack thereof. The national voter turnout was 50.2%, which means that just under half of the registered electorate did not turn out to vote in the local elections. This calls into question how can Ireland increase its voter turnout and interest in politics, in a time when there is increased dissatisfaction with politicians?

The solution may just be Voting Advice Applications (VAA). VAA's are internet tools deployed before elections to assist voters in their electoral decisions by comparing their policy positions with the stances of political parties and candidates. Because political knowledge and feelings of political competence are essential for political participation, the idea behind VAA's are that they are a tool to inform and mobilise individual voters. The aim is to increase voter's political knowledge, as well as their interest in political matters, with much evidence showing that VAA's do just this (e.g. Kamoen et al. 2015) and also elevate turnout (e.g. Garzia, De Angelis & Pianzola, 2014).
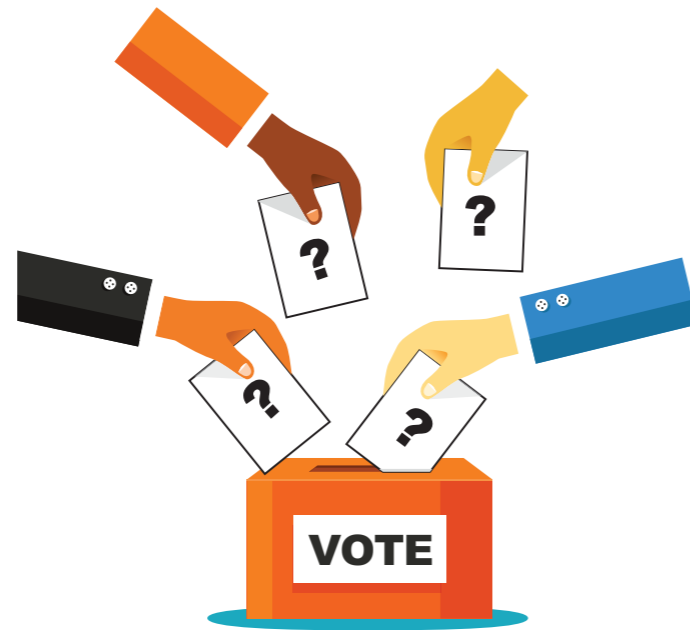
The chart below shows the output from the euandi2019 VAA system for the European Parliament Elections. This VAA had 22 statements dispersed across issue domains using a Likert scale. This Landscape graph shows a list of political parties in the country (Ireland) that overlap with the users views, values and priorities. The values are arrived at through positioning oneself on a Likert scale on 22 policy statements. The values in Fig. 1 reflect the average opinion closeness between the user and different parties. There is also the ability to click on a political party's name to get a statement-by-statement breakdown of how that party is positioned relative to the user. This makes it a great tool to enable citizens to learn about a party's stance on issues in the run up to elections and can be particularly useful for undecided voters.

VAA's have experienced a great deal of success over the past decade across the globe and are now an integral part of the electoral process. Kristensen & Solhaug (2016) note how VAA's are among the most commonly used internet applications during elections. Attracting high numbers of users in much of Western Europe, most notably the Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany, Finland and Belgium, some of which have been available since the mid 1990's, and indeed most European countries have more than one VAA. Thus, they are becoming an increasingly relevant factor within modern political campaigning.

However, Ireland has not jumped on the VAA bandwagon and is an outlier on this trend, only intermittently producing this tool for citizens. This has been done through whichcandidate.ie, which in the past has served voters for the 2014 local election in Limerick and the 2016 Irish general elections. This year there were two VAA tools for Irish citizens interested in the European Parliament elections, but none for the local elections.

VAA's can act as an important guide in an increasingly blurry political landscape. Where the knowledge in the run up to elections is characterised by strategic communication aimed at attracting voters, VAA's have the ability to act as a mobilisng factor and affect voter turnout. Having this informal tool in Ireland has the potential to improve the quality of democratic participation by making it easier for voters to become informed about the policy positions of political parties. They also provide a much needed shortcut to important information on party positions, as they focus people's attention on party programmes and policy issues, which compels parties to discuss issues with substance. Consequently, an electoral commission may be needed to support voter education programmes, such as VAA's and to carry out 'get out and vote' measures ahead of elections.

ELECTION SPECIAL

POLITICAL PARTY	OVERLAP WITH YOUR POSITIONS
Labour Party	64%
Fianna Fáil	64%
Fine Gael	63%
Green Party	61%
Solidarity-People Before Profit	56%
Sinn Féin	53%
Social Democrats	50%
The Workers Party	45%
Renua	44%
Direct Democracy Ireland	38%

Fig.1 Output of the euandi2019 VAA system.

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Over 1,100 local election candidates back 'Local Power Pledge'

The 'Local Power Pledge' was endorsed at national level by Fianna Fáil, Sinn Féin, the Labour Party, the Social Democrats, the Green Party, People Before Profit, Solidarity, Independents 4 Change, Aontú and the Workers Party. Almost 300 (290) candidates also signed the pledge individually, including 15 Fine Gael candidates and 52 Independents.

The pledge is part of the 'More Power To You' campaign for enhanced local democracy and community services, which was launched by Fórsa, Siptu and Connect in March. Between them, the three unions represent over 30,000 local council workers.

The unions called for substantially increased revenue and funding powers for local authorities after they published research that shows Irish councils have less autonomy from central government than their counterparts in 39 European countries. Their 'More Power To You' campaign also calls for legislative changes to facilitate directly-elected mayors and restore and expand town councils, which were abolished in 2014.

Prior to launching the campaign in March, the unions commissioned research from Dr Mary Murphy of Maynooth University. Her report, Democracy Works If You Let It, said Irish local democracy had been eroded by austerity-era budget cuts and staff reductions; the centralisation of services like water, driving licences and higher education grants; the privatisation of services like refuse collection and housing; and excessive executive direction and new management processes that have increased bureaucratic powers at the expense of political representatives.

Three of the national parties that signed the pledge did so with slight caveats. Fianna Fáil does not support the reintroduction of public provision of domestic waste services. The Workers' Party and Solidarity do not support directly-elected mayors.

Funding announced to support women in local elections

Funding of almost €200,000 was announced in early May to support practical measures to address the current imbalance between women and men in local government.

In the 2014 local elections, only 21% of candidates elected were women, placing Ireland well behind the EU28 average of 32% for female representation in politics.

The breakdown of the funding is presented below:
- €110,000 to Women for Election for their training and capacity building activities for 2019.
- €28,000 to Women for Election for a social media video campaign to promote the participation of women in the 2019 local elections and the role of women in local government.
- €27,240 to Longford Women's Link/5050 North West for training courses and a promotional campaign for women specifically in rural areas.
- €13,794 to National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) for promotional events surrounding the 120 anniversary of Local Government, including at a local level.
- €15,015 to NWCI to conduct primary research into the experiences of women in local elections.

Other measures, including the funding scheme to incentivise political parties to field more women candidates in the 2019 local elections and initiatives at council level to support councillors with family and caring responsibilities, are separately underway. The department have also proposed commissioning research to explore the experiences of women seeking to enter local politics.

WHERE DO YOUR TAXES GO?

Gerard Turley and Stephen McNena

Initially designed for *PublicPolicy.ie* with funding from Atlantic Philanthropies, the www.localauthorityfinances.com website shows local council revenue incomes and spending divisions.

A imed at improving transparency and accountability but also at informing the public on how local councils raise and spend taxpayers' money, the interactive web application can be used to readily access individual council income and spending budgets, but also cross-council comparisons with a view to identifying best and worst performing councils.

Using local authority budget data from the website, our summary table shows some big differences in the local authorities, in terms of both council spending (and changes over time) but also council income, and, in particular, commercial rates and local property tax (LPT). Among other explanations, differences in local authority spending can be accounted for by variations in expenditure needs, arising from differences in the socio-economic and demographic profile of the area and its population. Of the eight functional areas that local councils provide, four service divisions account for 75 per cent of total current spending. These are housing (€351), roads (€208), environmental services (€152) and recreation & amenities (€102), with the national average spend per person in 2019 for each of these service divisions reported in brackets.

Across the 31 local authorities there are sizeable differences in terms of how much councils spend per person, with the highest and lowest spend per head in Dublin City Council and Meath County Council, at €1,751 and €635 per inhabitant respectively.

Across the 31 local authorities there are sizeable differences in terms of how much councils spend per person, with the highest and lowest spend per head in Dublin City Council and Meath County Council, at €1,751 and €635 per inhabitant respectively. More specifically, expenditure per person on housing ranges from €686 in Dublin City Council to €86 in Galway County Council. On roads, the range is €396 in Leitrim County Council to €92 in Fingal County Council. For environmental services, including the fire service and street cleaning, Dublin City Council spends €362 per person whereas Meath County Council spends €84 per person. On recreation & amenities, spending per capita ranges from €223 in Galway City Council to €44 in Meath County Council.

As for spending changes over time, in general it is the more urban, eastern local authorities that have witnessed the largest increases in day-to-day spending since the last local elections, with the more rural local authorities experiencing the smallest increases and even some recording reductions in spending since 2014. In contrast, all local authorities experienced reductions in current (and even more so in capital) spending between the local elections of 2009 and 2014, coinciding with the years of austerity. Notwithstanding the recovery in the general economy since the last local elections, the issue of the rural/urban divide remains a serious challenge for our policymakers, both local and national.

Funding sources also differ, reflecting differences in tax bases and economic activity. These revenue income differences are particularly true for rural versus urban councils, with the more urban densely populated councils able to rely more on own-source incomes such as commercial rates, retained LPT and user charges, resulting in a greater degree of fiscal autonomy for these councils, while the rural less populated county councils have to depend more on central government grants to provide local public services.

As most tax revenue for local councils is in the form of commercial rates and not LPT, we report the commercial rate called the Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV), for 2019. For those local councils that have not revalued the commercial rates base recently, the ARV ranges from 79.25 in Kerry County Council to 56.77 in Tipperary County Council. Where local councils have undertaken a recent revaluation of industrial and commercial properties liable for commercial rates, the ARV ranges from 0.2760 in South Dublin County Council to 0.1500 in Fingal County Council. Indeed, of the four Dublin councils, two of them are amongst the councils that levy the highest ARVs in the country, but, on the other hand, the other two Dublin councils have the lowest ARVs nationwide. As for these cross-council differences in the ARV, the ARV in 2019 in any local council is a reflection of that council's ARV levied in the past.

As a tax on business property, commercial rates account for about 30 percent of total revenue income, as against the LPT which accounts for only eight per cent of revenue income. Given the Government's recent and regrettable decision to, yet again, defer the revaluation of residential properties for LPT purposes, this imbalance between business and non-business taxes to fund local public services is an issue that requires more analysis and discussion, with the 2019 local elections

an ideal opportunity for voters and policymakers to debate this and other local concerns. These cross-council differences in budget income and spending are not unexpected, given the variations in the profile, circumstances and choices of the different areas and their constituents. After all, the argument in favour of decentralisation and having local councils (and elections!) is to bring government closer to the people, so that

citizens get what they want given their differences in preferences and willingness to pay, rather than the uniformity than comes with central government provision.

For more information on this research and the www.localauthorityfinances.com website contact NUI Galway economics lecturers Gerard Turley or Stephen McNena at gerard.turley@nuigalway.ie or stephen.mcnena@nuigalway.ie

LOCAL COUNCIL SPENDING AND INCOME

Spending				Income				
Local Council	Expenditure per person 2019, €	Local Council	% change in expenditure 2014-19	Local Council	ARV 2019	Local Council	ARV 2019
Dublin city	1,751	Laois	34	Kerry	79.25	South Dublin*	0.2760
Cork city	1,328	Dublin city	21	Mayo	75.40	Limerick*	0.2677
Waterford	1,176	Meath	18	Cork city	74.98	Dublin city*	0.2610
Leitrim	1,139	Kerry	16	Cork	74.75	Waterford*	0.2583
Galway city	1,117	South Dublin	12	Wexford*	73.67	Carlow	0.2571
Longford	1,106	Cavan	12	Clare	72.99	Longford*	0.2401
Mayo	1,059	Kilkenny	12	Wicklow	72.04	Sligo	0.2300
Tipperary	1,014	DLR	11	Donegal	71.81	Roscommon	0.2250
Sligo	995	Kildare	11	Meath	69.6245	Kildare	0.2246
Monaghan	990	Fingal	10	Galway city	67.4009	Offaly	0.2198
Clare	990	Galway city	9	Galway	66.59	Leitrim	0.2103
Kerry	975	Clare	8	Laois*	66.57	Kilkenny	0.2000
Donegal	917	Westmeath	7	Cavan	60.87	Westmeath	0.1830
Carlow	885	Leitrim	7	Louth	60.00	DLR*	0.1673
Roscommon	883	Wexford	6	Monaghan	59.04	Fingal*	0.1500
Cavan	879	Cork	6	Tipperary	56.77		
South Dublin	871	Sligo	5				
Westmeath	868	Waterford	4				
Laois	851	Monaghan	3				
DLR	843	Tipperary	2				
Cork	825	Cork city	1				
Louth	823	Longford	1				
Kilkenny	803	Mayo	-1				
Fingal	802	Donegal	-2				
Wexford	781	Offaly	-4				
Offaly	774	Galway	-4				
Wicklow	722	Carlow	-5				
Kildare	678	Roscommon	-6				
Galway	671	Wicklow	-7				
Meath	635	Louth	-9				
All^	1,084						

Source: www.localauthorityfinances.com; Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government's website www.housing.gov.ie

*The asterisk indicates councils that changed the LPT rate for 2019, with the councils outside the Dublin area opting for a rate increase (+2.5% by Waterford City and County Council; +7.5% by Limerick City and County Council; +10% by Laois County Council and Wexford County Council; + 15% by Longford County Council) compared to the four Dublin councils that all decreased the LPT, and by the full 15% with the exception of Fingal County Council that agreed a 10% reduction.

^Expenditure data for Limerick City and County Council are not included as its annual budget is inflated by the spending on the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme with Limerick City and County Council running the shared services centre on behalf of the 31 local authorities. Similarly, Dublin City Council is the lead local authority in the Dublin region for homeless services (operating a shared service arrangement via the Dublin Region Homeless Executive), and for the fire service. This is important when comparing expenditure data across the four Dublin councils.

First ever planning regulator takes office

The new, and first ever, Planning Regulator, Niall Cussen provided an in-depth account of his new office and role at a recent seminar in Maynooth University, organised by the Irish section of the Regional Studies Association.

The Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) is an independent public body established by Government to oversee the effective delivery of planning services to the public by local authorities and An Bord Pleanála ensuring quality outcomes in relation to proper planning and sustainable development. The establishment of such an office was first proposed in the context of the Mahon Tribunal.

What is the purpose of the OPR?

The overall purpose of the OPR is to ensure that Ireland's 31 planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála deliver planning functions of high quality and standards for the benefit of our country.

- independent assessment of all local authority and regional assembly forward planning, including the zoning decisions of local authority members in local area and development plans;

- conducting reviews of the organisation, systems and procedures used by any planning authority or An Bord Pleanála in the performance of any of their planning functions under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), including risks of corruption and on foot of individual complaints from members of the public; and

- driving national research, education and public information programmes to highlight the role and benefit of planning.

The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018 established the legal basis for the OPR and outlines its roles and functions in detail. An overview is also provided on the OPR website (www.opr.ie)

In his presentation, Mr Cussen highlighted that the OPR will in no way replace the role of the Ombudsman in relation to complaints. While the OPR has a role in organisational review of systems and procedures, including assessing risks of maladministration or corruption, it will not consider individual cases.

Local Community Development Committees

COLLABORATION IS KEY

Place-Based Leadership Development and the collaborative challenge

Rob Worrall and Fergal O'Leary

This article looks at the challenge of collaboration, which remains a stubborn feature of community development work in Ireland. A summary of the findings from an IPA leadership workshop, involving LCDC members, is provided. This workshop revealed some of the collaborative barriers facing community development practitioners today. In terms of a possible solution, Place-Based Leadership Development (P-BLD) is discussed; a framework which offers a practical and evidence-based approach for improving joint working between socio-economic partners.

The most recent efforts to reform Ireland's local development sector, and provide local authorities with better control, saw the establishment of the *Steering Group for the Alignment of Local Government and Local Development* in 2011. As the group's name suggests, a process of alignment was thought necessary to address the rather siloed nature of community development. The 'bottom-up' approach to community development, and its related principles, guided the Steering Group's work. To maximise the benefits arising from the alignment process, their final report argued for greater trust and collaboration between the local government and local development sectors. A revised committee structure, supported by training and capacity-building initiatives, was viewed as the vehicle to facilitate this alignment.

Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs), in their short history, have generated a degree of controversy. Their initial proposal as Socio-Economic Committees (SECs), in 2012's Putting People First (PPF) policy paper, was met with speculation and concern. The potential implications for Ireland's fifty local development companies was unclear – driven in part by a lack of understanding around the remit of the proposed committee structure. PPF explicitly stated that the role of such companies, as programme implementers,

was to be retained given their 'considerable expertise and a proven track record in delivery of services'. Yet despite this, it was reported in the press that the SECs would 'replace the community-based companies at county-level'.[1] Elsewhere, it was stated that up to 2,000 jobs in the sector were at risk.[2]

The prospect of development companies ceding administrative responsibilities to these new committees, led by the local authorities, troubled the Irish Local Development Network (ILDN) - representative body of the local development companies. The ILDN were adamant that the proposed committees would result in job losses and the closure of their companies. An enhanced local authority role risked leaving development companies 'without any core funding' and thereby side-lining the voluntary sector.[3] LCDCs, therefore, were launched - by the Local Government Reform Act 2014 - in a somewhat tense and unwelcome atmosphere. LCDCs now exist within each local authority area and, similar to the County/City Development Boards which they replaced, comprise of members from the statutory and non-statutory groups. Each LCDC is tasked with planning, monitoring and overseeing the LEADER and SICAP funding of local and community development initiatives.

Barriers to collaboration and Place-Based Leadership Development

Within the community development sector, there are challenges inherent in collaborating at interpersonal and interagency levels. Tensions can arise over roles, responsibilities and mandates which hinder effective working relations between groups. Personal motivations and conflicting interpretations further complicate matters. Likewise, key questions can prove problematic; for instance, which sector or agency should take the lead role in the developmental process, and whose vision of a future community is to be followed? In effect, a community development forum of statutory and non-statutory groups can become a site of contestation; a formal structure in which personal, political, professional and organisational interests interact and potentially distract from the primary objective of serving the public good.

In this context, a growing interest in, and strong evidence of the need for, improved place-based leadership has emerged. Experts argue for enhanced local capacity to tackle socio-economic challenges at community-level. The Placed-Based Leadership Development (P-BLD) framework, is one of the first attempts to go beyond merely identifying the need; it crucially offers a practical and applied approach to build individual and collective capability for effective joint working/problem-solving. The P-BLD framework is based on research exploring the lived experience of cross-sector groups of political, managerial private, public and community leaders involved in local collaboratives in three English local

Tensions can arise over roles, responsibilities and mandates which hinder effective working relations between groups. Personal motivations and conflicting interpretations further complicate matters.

county council areas. Elsewhere, P-BLD interventions in Africa, seeking to empower local leaders in their efforts to prevent urban violence, have proven effective in tackling persistent barriers to collaboration. The P-BLD process identifies interlinked tensions at the individual level within self, between self and other, between self and organisation/sector, and between self and wider place. Rather than deliberately avoiding discussions on underlying collaborative problems, P-BLD encourages participants to talk openly (in a group setting) about existing tensions and their perspectives and thereby begin to address vexing issues.

P-BLD interventions are specifically designed for each situation - based on research, and drawing directly on the lived experience of participants. Through this methodical approach, the P-BLD framework builds an evidence base of what works practically. Findings are supported by evidence from the emerging body of research on leadership of places and the conditions considered necessary for social innovation and collective impact. Therefore, the P-BLD framework reaches beyond democratic representation and seeks to enhance collective participation from statutory and non-statutory leadership. It involves non-political, non-managerial leaders and representatives from wider civil society.

IPA workshop

A one-day IPA leadership workshop was held to explore the challenges facing LCDC members in their community development role. Entitled 'Thinking Strategically and Working Collaboratively', the interactive workshop was attended by twenty-nine participants from fourteen LCDCs. It comprised of elected members, local authority staff, representatives from the community and voluntary sector and the Department of Rural and Community Development.

[1] Irish Examiner, 12 Apr. 2013.
[2] Westmeath Examiner, 9 Feb. 2013.
[3] Ibid.

The seminar presented an ideal opportunity to trial the P-BLD approach in Ireland. By embracing P-BLD, and discussing contentious topics with fellow collaborators, local leaders are encouraged to think in a more collaborative and strategic manner.

An intended outcome of the facilitated workshop was to develop the participants' understanding of their governance and strategic leadership duties. Furthermore, by piloting P-BLD ideas, it sought to get the LCDC members present to think beyond narrow sectoral interests and maintain a focus on the common objective of maximising outcomes for their communities. The point was emphasised to participants that local leaders, regardless of the context, improve their collaborative skills by being open to different perspectives, by engaging in constructive dialogue, and through managing tensions positively. Such a progressive approach is essential for building an atmosphere of trust and cooperation - better leadership emerges as a result. Forging a collaborative mindset and culture, however, takes time and a willingness to change.

The participants were divided into geographically diverse groups and asked questions on issues relating to their LCDC experiences. When formulating the group responses, the participants were encouraged to be honest in their discussions and working collaboratively, tease out problems and offer solutions. From the structured group work and plenary feedback, valuable insights were gained into the challenges facing LCDC members in the areas of governance, the external working environment and collaboration. Common issues were identified which appear to be having a debilitating effect on community development efforts.

Whilst a general awareness of the principles of good governance was demonstrated by each group, on a practical level, several concerns were raised: conflicts of interest; poor management, with pressure to spend rather than effective resource allocation; personal agendas and domination by certain groups; inconsistent understanding of governance roles and responsibilities and limited capacity. Regarding external challenges, as the LCDC was still a relatively new structure, it was thought that it should only have been given the funding allocation role after it had become properly established; furthermore, a clearer identity for the LCDCs would have emerged by then. An overlap between funding streams, excessive regulation and administrative overload can, it seems, hinder a more strategic approach to community development.

In terms of collaboration, a lack of trust between the various LCDC stakeholders is a major problem. It was argued that 'legacy issues', arising from the reform process, contributed to negative feelings between the statutory and non-statutory partners. Misunderstanding and inadequate clarity often compounds the situation. It appears that meaningful participation by some LCDC members is largely absent. They are unwilling to share information or actively participate in committee proceedings - essential elements in the collaborative process.

It was repeatedly stated that the overly-bureaucratic nature of the LCDC structure can stymie strategic thinking. Rather than being an effective coordinator of community development, as envisaged by policy-makers, the committees appear (at times) to be lacking in direction.

Conclusion

Community development has been the longstanding policy response to addressing local socio-economic problems. The development process, however, is undoubtedly challenging. To effect material change locally, a multiagency approach is required. Paradoxically, interactions between statutory and non-statutory groups can make developmental work more problematic. Meaningful collaboration is often difficult to attain. Indeed, the continuing challenge of effective inter-agency collaboration testifies to the complexity of the local government and development sectors. A plethora of factors can strain working relations: poor communication; rivalries; personal agendas; conflicting objectives; administrative over-burden; culture and unrealistic expectations. For statutory and non-statutory agencies to work effectively towards community objectives, trusting relations need to exist.

The IPA's workshop with LCDC members identified challenges hindering community development work in Ireland today. The lack of trust between socio-economic partners was considered a major challenge for LCDCs to overcome. The P-BLD method adopted at the workshop, however, offers a possible solution. The framework seeks to confront contentious issues between partners by having the necessary awkward conversations. It is based on the practical view that mutual understanding is essential for collaborative efforts to succeed. If anything, the pilot workshop underlines the value of honest and constructive dialogue between LCDC partners for working through mutual challenges. A greater understanding of different perspectives builds trust and contributes towards better leadership. Ultimately, collaboration and strategic-thinking drive the community development process. A more open and committed approach may be required from agencies and local leaders alike, towards addressing their problems, if the collaborative hurdle is to be properly cleared.

NEWS

New electoral portal 'voter.ie' launched in the Dublin region

A new web portal enabling over 1 million Dublin residents to check their electoral details in real-time has been rolled out in the Dublin region. Voters can check if they are eligible to vote in an election by entering their full name and address or Eircode on the Voter.ie website. It is an additional service available to voters in Dublin and it does not replace the existing paper process.

Voter.ie is a joint initiative involving the four Dublin local authorities. It was developed to improve the efficiency and accuracy of the Register of Electors and allow for online registration.

In addition to the basic search functionality, the portal also allows voters who are registered with MyGovId to:
- Add themselves to the Register of Electors
- Change their address or other details, including citizenship or change of name
- Remove themselves from the Register

The system performed very well in the recent local and European elections with approximately 520,000 queries performed on www.voter.ie between 3rd April 2019 and polling day on 24th May.

Collectively the four Dublin local authorities received 12,654 supplement applications in advance of polling day, 2,058 (16.3%) of which were submitted through the online portal.

Updates on housing and homelessness

There is an upward trend in the number of new homes becoming available, according to the CSO Quarter 1 2019 New Dwellings Completion Report:
- 22,242 new homes available for use in 12 months up to end March 2019
- Represents a 19% increase on the previous 12 months
- Increase of 41% in planning permissions compared to 2017

The number of people accessing local authority managed emergency accommodation continues to rise. In April, 6584 adults and 3794 children were recorded as homeless. 67 per cent were in the Dublin region. Almost three quarters of families accessing emergency accommodation are in the Dublin region.

> **Local government has the potential to transform our communities but that potential is not being realised. It is time to harness this potential and deliver more power locally**
>
> Dr Seán Healy, Director, *Social Justice Ireland.*

MORE LOCAL POWER TO YOU!

When we compare local government tax and spending functions in Ireland with our European neighbours we come second last in terms of decentralisation.

This is one of the key messages from *Social Justice Ireland* as they publish the **National Social Monitor – Local Issues edition** which examines the role of local government and local authorities in addressing local needs.

If we want to develop appropriate, flexible and place-based responses to local and regional issues, then we must maximise the potential of local government. This requires giving local government the decision-making powers, responsibility and resources to respond to local issues and to improve service delivery and engagement at a local and regional level.

Local response to local issues – not so straightforward in Ireland
"Ireland is out of step with our international peers in terms of local government power. When we compare local government tax and spending functions in Ireland with our European neighbours we come second last in terms of decentralisation. More than 95 per cent of tax revenues in Ireland are raised by central government and 93 per cent of all public spending in Ireland is done at central government level" – Colette Bennett, Research and Policy Analyst, Social Justice Ireland.

The result is that local authorities are heavily dependent on central government to fund large sections of their work. This high degree of centralisation can leave local communities feeling as if they have little or no say in how local policy is developed. At a time of growing disconnect between the wider public and politics, we must maximise the potential of local government to increase engagement locally and to develop and deliver local policy solutions to local problems.

Local government and national challenges
The Monitor goes on to claim that although centralisation has diminished the role of local government over the years, decisions made by local councils on areas such as housing, roads, recreation facilities, water services, waste management, climate action, and local participation have a profound impact on communities across the country. Housing and climate change are two national challenges where local government decisions can have a profound impact.

Housing
The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) continued to outpace the provision of long-term sustainable homes, accounting for 66% of all social housing output last year. The continued reliance on HAP means that money that should be used in the provision of long-term sustainable homes that would be an asset to the council is instead being effectively used to subsidise landlords in the private rented sector with no long-term return to the council or to the state.

Local authorities and local representatives must be accountable for their budgetary decisions in the midst of a housing crisis, both to their immediate constituents and to the wider population who will feel the impact of poor Exchequer decisions, which too often look to the short-term rather than plan for the future.

Climate change and flooding
"Local Authorities are expected to play a key role in helping the country to adapt to climate change. They must develop their own local adaptation strategy which involves developing a local profile of climate hazards and vulnerabilities, identifying future risks and drafting, implementing and monitoring a strategy to mitigate against these risks" – Eamon Murphy, Economic and Social Analyst, Social Justice Ireland.

Last year only nine local authorities provided a specific budget line for 'Climate Change and Flooding' in their 2018 budgets. These were Fingal, Offaly, Wicklow, Mayo, Cork County, Galway City, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, Limerick and Waterford. While the remaining 22 local authorities may have made provision elsewhere in other budget lines, it is important that this dedicated budget line is used in all local authority budgets going forward to clearly signal their intent to address this pressing issue.

"Local government has the potential to do much more to deliver and engage at a local level. In order to maximise this potential it must be given the resources and responsibility to improve service delivery at local level and to engage the people and communities it represents in developing policies that will shape the future of these communities" – Eamon Murphy.

NEWS

Local Enterprise Offices – celebrating five years

- 18,640 net jobs created
- €81.5 million in grants approved
- Over 140,000 trained
- Over 5,000 projects approved

Since the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) were established in 2014 they have supported the creation of over 18,600 jobs nationwide with 144,830 entrepreneurs and business people trained in a range of skills over the five years. The figures were announced by Heather Humphreys T.D., Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation and Pat Breen T.D., Minister for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection at an event in Russborough House in Wicklow to celebrate 5 Years of the Local Enterprise Offices.

120 years of local democracy in Ireland

The first local elections in Ireland were held on April 6th 1899. To mark this occasion, an exhibition to celebrate the history of Irish Local Government will travel to local authorities across the country during 2019. The exhibition was launched by MinisterJohn Paul Phelan who paid tribute to all who have served in local politics and worked in local government over the past 120 years.

The role of women in local government is being highlighted, as women could stand for election and vote for the first time in 1899. The National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) marked the historic milestone with an event in Monaghan in May. NWCI called on voters to elect feminist candidates who help to create sustainable communities for women and families to live in.

Minister John Paul Phelan at the launch of the exhibition

May was an important month for climate action. Ireland became the second country in the world to declare a national climate change and biodiversity emergency. The announcement from the Dáil came after consideration of a report from the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action, founded on the 17 recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly's report *How the State can make Ireland a Leader in tackling Climate Change* (April 2018). The local and European elections saw a surge in support for Green Party councilors, which likely indicates a desire for the public to see action on climate change.

Climate Change:
NATIONAL EMERGENCY- LOCAL RESPONSES

Ellen Garvey, IPA, writes about how local authorities are adapting to climate change.

T he Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment has said, 'The decisions we make now in tackling climate disruption will define the next century. This government wants to make Ireland a leader in responding to climate change, not a follower'. [1]

However, Ireland is falling behind in its climate change commitments and was rated as the worst performing country in the EU in the Climate Change Performance Index (2019).

Climate change is one of the most pressing global issues, and policy responses are needed at all levels of governance. There are two fundamental policy responses to climate change: mitigation (reducing greenhouse gas emissions), and adaptation (preparing society for the impacts of climate change).

Under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, government have produced a National Mitigation Plan (NMP, 2017) and National Adaptation Framework (NAF, 2018). The NAF in particular highlights

However, Ireland is falling behind in its climate change commitments and was rated as the worst performing country in the EU in the Climate Change Performance Index (2019).

the crucial role that local authorities play in addressing climate change and mandates that local authorities produce local adaptation plans by 30 September 2019. Statutory guidelines are now in place for the development of these plans and four Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) have been established to support local authorities in their development.

Local authorities are actively working with their regional CARO and are at various stages in the adaptation planning process. In February 2019 the four Dublin local authorities (DLAs) published their draft adaptation plans, titled Climate Change Action Plans 2019-2024.

This article provides a brief summary of the content of these plans and the process used for their completion, which may be of use to other local authorities.

Dublin's Climate Adaptation Plans
All four DLA's Climate Change Action Plans have been formally approved by their respective councils. The plans were developed by each DLAs environment strategic planning committee, in collaboration with Codema (Dublin's Energy Agency) and the Dublin Metropolitan CARO.

The Process
The methodology to develop the DLAs Climate Change Action Plans was based on the Five Milestone Approach developed by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI). The publication and approval of the plans marks completion of the first three milestones (initiate, research, and plan), whilst milestones four and five concern implementation, monitoring, and iteration.

Initiating and researching involved establishing climate change adaptation and mitigation baselines and risk assessments and developing 'A Strategy towards Climate Action Plans for the Dublin Local Authorities' (Codema, 2017) to guide action. Throughout the process Codema engaged with Council staff through a number of meetings and workshops to introduce staff to the action plan process. Codema carried out an adaptation risk assessment for each DLA to identify the current climate change risks, and with support from the Sustainable Energy Authority (SEA) developed energy and emissions baselines – both for each DLAs individual council operations and area-wide. With these risks and baselines established actions could be formulated, this involved interviews, research and workshops including the sharing of knowledge between the four DLAs.

On completion of the four draft Climate Change Action Plans, public consultation ran for six weeks in February and March 2019. Consultation events were advertised in print and digital newspapers and through a successful social media campaign. Public consultation increases awareness of climate action and provides opportunities for more creative and dynamic engagement and a higher variety of submissions. The public consultation was a successful endeavour, for example, Dublin City

[1] Ministers foreword in Local Authority Adaptation Strategy Development Guidelines (2018)

Council received 234 valid submissions which resulted in adding 32 actions and amending a further 25 to the draft plan which included 192 actions.

Adaptation and Mitigation Baselines
Codema produced adaptation baselines using a number of climate variables and sources. Adaptation baselines include observed and projected changes in the categories of extreme weather events, sea level rise, and flooding – with projections up to 30 years and a confidence level of their occurrence. In addition, risk matrices for different climatic events and trends were calculated.

Findings show that climate change is already impacting all four DLAs and events are 'very likely to increase in their frequency and intensity'.

The mitigation baselines, using data from SEA's Monitoring and Reporting database and the Central Statistics Office (CSO), calculate the greenhouse gas emissions from each DLAs own buildings and operations and for each local authority area. In all DLAs carbon emissions have been reduced over the past 10 years (by 17-24%), putting Dublin on target to meet their 2020 energy efficiency target of 33%. However, Council buildings and operations only account for 2-5% of emissions in each DLA area, highlighting the need to work 'with key stakeholders to influence and support carbon reduction initiatives across the County's transport, commercial and residential sectors'.

Adaptation and Mitigation Actions
Whilst each Climate Change Action Plan is unique to its identified risks and functional area, they share four high-level targets:

- A 33% improvement in the Council's energy efficiency by 2020
- A 40% reduction in the Council's greenhouse gas emissions by 2030
- To make Dublin a climate resilient region, by reducing the impacts of future climate change-related events
- To actively engage and inform citizens on climate change

The draft plans contain between 108 and 192 individual actions, grouped into five key action areas. Key actions are summarised in Table 1.

Each action area lists the stakeholders to work with and influence (e.g. general public, private businesses, government departments and agencies, energy and transport authorities, developers, community groups, environmental and interest groups, schools and third-level institutions)

and examples of relevant legislation/policies/guidelines. Actions are given a timeframe, lead department/agency and indicators of success. Indicators are crucial to measure progress on implementation.

Implementation
The Dublin Metropolitan CARO will oversee implementation of the Climate Change Action Plans and align actions with sectoral adaptation plans through liaising with relevant government departments.

Each DLA has established a climate team consisting of representatives from across their organisation. The climate team's mandate includes:

- Climate-proofing existing and future corporate strategies, development plans and local economic development plans
- Establishing a monitoring and reporting structure – including quarterly schedule of meetings to evaluate progress.
- Coordinating work on climate actions
- Following up with respective departments on progress
- Developing a new action plan every five years

Codema will also offer continued support across many actions, including research, technical assessment, procurement, and funding applications. The four DLAs will also seek private commercial opportunities, third level research partnerships, and seek other technical and financial supports in implementing actions.

Monitoring and Iteration
The actions outlined in the plans will be monitored and updated by the climate teams, working closely with the Dublin Metropolitan CARO. Progress will be reported to each DLAs environment SPC and the chief executive's office.

The plans highlight the challenges of getting localised, reliable and valid data which is crucial for monitoring progress. Currently the DLAs rely on the CSO and various government departments for data on air quality (EPA), transportation (NTA), energy (SEA) and flood risk (OPW).

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are agreed between the CARO and the national Local Authority Climate Change Steering Group, which links with the DCCAE, various agencies and the national Climate Change Advisory Council. This ensures that KPIs are aligned with national and EU climate policies.

In addition, as signatories to the EU Covenant of Mayors for

TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF KEY CLIMATE CHANGE ACTIONS FROM THE FOUR DUBLIN LOCAL AUTHORITIES' DRAFT CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLANS 2019-2024

	Energy and Buildings	Transport	Flood Resilience	Nature-Based Solutions	Resource Management
Action areas:	Energy Planning, Energy Efficiency and Renewables, Research and Innovation, Energy Awareness	Staff Travel, Operations, Integration of Spatial Planning and Transport, Active Travel and Behaviour Change, Public Transport	Flood Risk Management, Flood Defence	Operations, Green Infrastructure, Agriculture, Tree Management, Conservation and Preservation	Procurement, Waste Management, Litter and Recycling in the Public Realm, Landfill Management, Water Conservation, Awareness
Actions include:	Public lighting upgrades, building retrofits with energy performance guarantees, and energy master-planning	Electrification/ upgrading of Council fleet, constructing or improving cycle routes and accessible footways, and expanding bike share schemes	Flood resilient urban design, coordinating emergency response plans, coastal zone and flood management, and building flood defences	Developing green infrastructure and greenways, maintaining public parks, and protecting native species	Waste prevention initiatives with staff and the public, smart bins water conservation, support for local community groups and running anti-food waste and anti-dumping campaigns

Climate and Energy, the four DLAs commit to reporting on implementation progress every two years.

Recommendations for new councillors
Recently elected council members should check the progress of their Local Adaptation Plans to ensure they are on target for completion by 30th September 2019 and being produced in accordance with the statutory guidelines.

Climate change is a cross-cutting issue with far-reaching economic, social and environmental impacts; climate action should be a key priority for all council members. Per the statutory guidelines, a dedicated adaptation team with representatives across all relevant departments needs to be in place and actively collaborating with the appropriate Climate Action Regional Office, other local authorities and relevant national sectors.

Key recommendations:

- Avail of the online climate information resource "Climate Ireland" (www.climateireland.ie), which includes essential information and resources on climate change and adaptation and a number of frameworks and tools to support local authorities in developing their adaptation plans.
- Check if your local authority is a signatory to the EU Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (www.covenantofmayors.eu), voluntarily joining the initiative demonstrates a commitment to climate action. Currently 16 of the 31 City and County Councils are signatories to the initiative
- Ensure the adaptation team has a stakeholder engagement and communication plan, engage with the public and facilitate bottom-up solutions where appropriate. Addressing climate change is not a siloed activity and stakeholder buy-in is essential to success
- Review your local authority's Local Community and Economic Plans (2016-2021) to align previous climate initiatives with current plans
- Familiarise yourself with national and European climate agreements, directives, legislation and regulations
- Aim to be a climate leader, with initiatives that can be replicated by citizens, private businesses and other public bodies
- Implementation and Monitoring of local adaptation plans is crucial: ensure actions are integrated into the daily operations of your council and that implementation plans, monitoring and reporting structures are in place
- A key message emerging from the four DLAs plans is that local authority buildings and operations account for less than 5% of emissions: initiatives that support and influence key stakeholders in local transport, commercial and residential sectors to reduce their GHG emissions is crucial for climate change mitigation
- Seek technical and financial supports: National options include The Climate Action Fund and SEAI grants and community projects. International funding streams include Interreg Europe, LIFE and Horizon 2020.

Local authorities plan €150m investment in tourism projects

TOURISM IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

More than 1,400 festivals and events are run or supported by local authorities each year at a cost of €11.2 million to local authorities.

- More than 1,400 festivals and events are run or supported by local authorities each year at a cost of €11.2 million to local authorities. Festivals and events attract more than 200,000 overseas visitors and contribute over €100 million to the economy each year, according to Fáilte Ireland. As well as their financial investment, local authorities provide other supports such as implementing road closures, providing staging areas, erecting signage, managing traffic, street cleaning and litter management, and health and safety support.

- Almost 300 dedicated tourism staff are employed across the local authority sector. They collaborate across departments with many more staff on events and activities to improve the tourism offering.

Local Authority Times would love to hear about new and exciting tourism initiatives being led by local authorities. Please get in touch if you'd like to see your initiative featured in our next edition.

The County and City Management Association (CCMA) in association with Fáilte Ireland held a conference 'Tourism is Everyone's Business' on Thursday April 4th. A new report was launched at the conference outlining the contribution of Ireland's City and County Councils to tourism development, including 256 new tourism projects, with €156 million committed to these projects by councils including for new walking trails, discovery centres, cultural plazas, harbours, and sports facilities. An additional €205 million will be leveraged for the projects from external agencies.

Local authorities directly invested €99.4million to develop tourist attractions in the five years 2014-2018. On top of that, councils leveraged a further €88.4 million from external agencies towards these developments, meaning City and County Councils harnessed a total capital investment in tourism attractions of €185.8 million.

Ann Doherty, chair of the CCMA Economic and Enterprise Committee, noted how this increased investment will play a key part in building resilience in the context of Brexit: "With 35% of Ireland's overseas tourists coming from the UK, and in a competitive international market, it has never been more important to actively develop new offerings to provide diverse and niche tourism products throughout the country to appeal to both domestic and foreign tourists."

A report released at the conference shows:

- On a day-to-day basis, local authorities run or support more than 460 tourist attractions nationwide, contributing almost €52m each year towards their operations. These include historic buildings, forest parks, greenways, interpretive centres, museums, heritage centres and trails, 65% of which are free of charge to visitors.

- In 2018, a total of €7.8 million was spent by local authorities to develop specific tourism infrastructure. Almost half of this, €3.6 million, was invested directly by local authorities for facilities including upgrading amenities, maintaining beaches, building carparks, developing road signage and other travel infrastructure.

Pictured at the 'Tourism is Everyone's Business' Conference organised by the County and City Management Association (CCMA) in association with Failte Ireland are Jackie Maguire, County and City Management Association Chair, Ann Doherty, Cork City Council and Chief Executive Paul Kelly, Failte Ireland CEO.

Conference:
Local & European elections – one month on

The Electoral Geography Group in Maynooth University are hosting a one-day conference on the 2019 local and European elections on June 24th, one month on from the polling day. The conference will consider emerging trends and patterns, as well as discussion of the role played by local media in covering local politics and election contests. Registration for the free event is via Eventbrite at: https://www.eventbrite.ie/e/the-2019-local-and-european-elections-one-month-on-greenamis-falling-turnouts-long-counts-and-the-tickets-62971106274

Dr Adrian Kavanagh and colleagues went to huge effort to collect local newspapers, as the picture shows!

Limerick Economic Monitor

The inaugural Limerick Economic Monitor (LEM) which will see Limerick's economic and fiscal status analysed and tracked has recently been published. Commissioned by Limerick City and County Council and produced by EY-DKM Economic Advisory, the LEM will be the barometer used to track Limerick's performance against key economic indicators including employment, enterprise, investment, housing, consumer sentiment, and commercial property and will be published twice-yearly.

In so doing, it will benchmark Limerick's progress against local and national targets, as per the Limerick 2030 economic and spatial plan, and Project Ireland 2040. The LEM is the first economic monitor to be put in place in an Irish city outside the capital and will fill a gap in the availability of reliable data on regional economic output.

Rural Opportunity events highlight supports available to rural communities

Rural Opportunity showcased some of the best examples of how rural communities are accessing government supports and funds to shape their own destinies. This was demonstrated through a coordinated series of regional events in Kilkenny, Longford, Clare, Donegal and Cork, announcements and video case studies.

This cross-government initiative is being led by the Department of Rural and Community Development. Further information on its funding schemes can be found on the Department's website.

Community groups interested in accessing government funding for rural projects were invited to attend the regional events. Attendees were briefed on how funding can be accessed for successful rural, or community, projects. They also heard from representatives of rural communities who successfully availed of supports and delivered a programme or project in their locality. These projects have made a positive impact in terms of community development and resilience, enterprise or job development, tourism development and similar themes. Some examples of the projects showcased at the various events are provided here.

Donegal

Geraldine Horkan, Acting Chief Executive Westport Chamber of Commerce spoke about the Leeson Enterprise Centre in Westport and the support it has received from Mayo County Council, Enterprise Ireland and the Department of Rural and Community Development.

Pól McFadden, Chairperson of the Falcarragh Parish Development Association spoke about how the delivery of a new community centre was supported by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the LEADER programme.

Mick McEnroe, Secretary of the Strandhill Community Maritime Company told how they secured funding of over €1 million from Fáilte Ireland under its grant scheme for large tourism projects. They were also successful in securing funding of over €600,000 from the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund under Project Ireland 2040.

Cork

Anne Condon, Festival Co-ordinator of the Charlie Chaplin Comedy Festival in Waterville, Co. Kerry spoke about the support the festival has received from the LEADER Programme. The festival provides a considerable economic boost to the Waterville area.

Denis Withers, Secretary of the Banteer Community Sportsfield spoke about how support, through the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, will allow for a major upgrade of recreational facilities in Banteer, contributing to the amenity and economic development in the area.

Colm Murphy, Chief Executive Officer of the company Firebird Heating Solutions told how the company has thrived in a rural area, providing employment to 150 people. He spoke about how Údarás na Gaeltachta helped Firebird in a number of ways, including support with research, development and innovation.

Clare

Breda McNamara is Chairperson of the Development Committee for Cnoc na Gaoithe Cultural Centre in Tulla, Co. Clare. She told attendees how funding through the Town and Village Renewal Scheme helped refurbish a thriving centre that teaches traditional Irish language, music, song and dance.

Teresa Roche, of Kylemore Farmhouse Cheese spoke about how the funding she received through the LEADER programme and the Local Enterprise Office helped her to establish a rural enterprise near Abbey, Co. Galway.

Richard Walsh, Chairperson of the Murroe Town Park Project in Limerick said that LEADER and Rural Regeneration funding is helping to create community driven project. This involves the construction of a multi-purpose building for the community of Murroe-Boher and its surrounds.

NEWS

Town and Villages Renewal Scheme 2019

Mr Michael Ring TD, the Minister for Rural and Community Development, recently announced the launch of the 2019 Town and Village Renewal Scheme. The scheme supports the rejuvenation of rural towns and villages with populations of less than 10,000 people through projects that will have a viable, long-term benefit.

For 2019, the Town and Village Renewal Scheme will support projects which enhance the town or village centre environment. Building on the pilot scheme launched by Minister Ring in October 2018, it will also place a focus on initiatives which encourage increased residential occupancy in town centres.

Since the scheme was introduced in 2016, almost €53 million has been approved for over 670 projects across the country. These projects cover a range of activities, from improving the public realm, to job-creation initiatives such as the development of enterprise hubs and digital hubs.

As in previous years, the scheme will be administered through local authorities, who will be required to work closely with local communities and local businesses to develop and implement proposals that can make a

lasting impact in revitalising rural towns and villages across the country.

Key points:
- The focus of the scheme for 2019 is on public-realm type activities and the enhancement of town centre amenities.
- Proposals are particularly welcomed for projects that have not previously been funded and from towns/villages most in need of support.
- Local authorities first seek expressions of interest for applications, which are then shortlisted, developed and submitted to the Department for assessment.
- Two categories of towns/villages are eligible. Those with a population of up to 5,000 (category 1) and those between 5,001 and 10,000 people (category 2).
- Category 1 areas will receive at least 60% of available funding.
- Funded can only be granted up to 80% of the total cost of the project. The remaining 20% should be contributed by the local authority and/or the community.
- The minimum grant amount is €20,000 and the maximum is generally €100,000.
- A higher maximum of €200,000 will be considered for a small number of projects where a robust case can be made demonstrating exceptional benefit to a town.

GET INVOLVED.

We are always interested in your views, so if you have any comments, suggestions or ideas for topics that we should address in future issues, please do not hesitate to let us know.

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