Planning, Environment & Emergency Services

The objective of this Directorate is to secure an improvement in the quality of life, including attainment of economic growth, an acceptable standard of living and a satisfactory physical environment for living and working. Fire Service, Civil Defence and Water Safety are all the responsibility of this section and combine to ensure that an effective emergency service is available throughout the county.

◤ Scotch Hall Development, Drogheda
▲ Tallanstown
▼ Firemen attending to a fire at Bridgeford, Drogheda

LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL
PLANNING

FORWARD PLANNING

The year 2004 was a busy one in terms of forward planning and significant progress has been made. Detailed below is an outline of the Development Plans either adopted or in train in 2004. These plans, involving a 6 year time horizon, outline the services which the council intends to provide directly. They also give guidance by defining policies for development in the interests of the common good.

In many instances, the planned location, timing and means of provision of required infrastructure development, e.g. water, sewage, roads etc. will determine the timing and location of private investment. The Plans therefore act as a guide to developers and investors as to what form, nature and extent of development are likely to be acceptable at various locations.

Rockeby Hall

Dundalk South West Local Area Plan

The preparation of this plan was commenced towards the end of 2004 and is currently being progressed. The Plan will facilitate the development of Dundalk and assist in achieving the critical mass required to enable Dundalk to achieve the population target as a gateway town as outlined in the National Spatial Strategy.

Drogheda Northern Environs Local Area Plan

This development plan prepared by SPA Planning Consultants was adopted in July 2004. It provides for a range of development uses in the Northern Environs of Drogheda, with a population of 20,000 within the next 20 years. It also forms the basis for the Masterplan for this area currently in preparation.

Masterplan for the Northern Environs of Drogheda

The Council commenced the procedure of preparing a Masterplan for the Northern Environs of Drogheda by inviting submissions from Planning Consultants to carry out the initial draft of the Plan. Stephen Ward Planning Consultants have since been appointed and are currently engaged in the project. A first draft will be ready in the second quarter of the year.

Category 1 Development Centres

Amendments were made to the following Local Area Plans in 2004

- Termonfeckin/Baltray
- Clogherhead.

Category II Development Centres

Amendments were made to the Ballagan Development Centre and the Ravensdale 1 Development Centre was adopted in 2004.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

Development Contribution Scheme

A contributions scheme under the provision of Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 was adopted by the Council on 16th February 2004, and has since been in operation. The scheme clearly sets out for developers the level of contribution required for each type of development, as well as the basis for levying the contribution. Contributions from the scheme will fund the provision of the necessary infrastructure to sustain future development and growth in the County.

Receipts from this scheme (excluding those levied prior to the adoption of this scheme) amounted to some €815,226 to the end of December 2004. In addition, a further €1,448,131was owing under the scheme for developments for which commencement notices were received prior to 31 December 2004.

There was no expenditure of development contributions received under this scheme during this initial period of it's operation to the end of 2004.

Urban and Town Renewal Schemes

The current scheme, under which the integrated Area Plans for Dundalk and Drogheda have been prepared, came into operation in 1999. It was originally intended to run until the end of 2002 but has been extended to July 2006, for those projects for which 15% of the total project cost had been spent by June 2003.

The Town Renewal scheme under which plans for Ardee, Dunleer,

O'Hares Mill, Dundalk – Urban & Village Renewal

Carlingford, and Castlebellingham were prepared has also been extended to July 2006 providing full planning applications were received by 31 December 2004.

Dyer Street – Urban & Village Renewal

Conservation and Built Heritage

The Planning & Development Act 2000 restated the provisions for the protection of Architectural Heritage which came into force in January 2000 under the provisions of the Local Government (Planning & Development) Act 1999. The Conservation officer jointly employed with Meath Co. Council continued her work in this area during 2004. A total of 5 grants were approved and paid under the Conservation Grants scheme during 2004 at a total cost of €84,000.

Planning Queries

During 2004 a system has been implemented to expand the availability of Planners to deal with general planning queries by telephone. A duty Planner is now available for general planning queries on a Tuesday and Thursday in addition to the standard availability by appointment on Wednesdays for pre-planning clinics.

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

WASTE MANAGEMENT

A review of the North East Waste Management Plan commenced in the latter part of the year with the initial public consultation process commencing in November. The consultation process is due to end on 31st January 2005 following which a draft report will be produced and go on public display for a period of two months.

At 31 December 2004 a total of 37 Waste Permits were in place. A total of 137 businesses in the County were registered with Repak in compliance with the Waste Management Packaging Regulations and 1 firm registered with Louth County Council under the self compliance scheme.

LANDFILL

Whiteriver Landfill Site, which has a licenced landfill capacity of over 96,000 tonnes, was the subject of major construction and improvement works during the year. Consultants Kirk McClure Morton prepared plans for on-site gas flaring, quarantine area and cell excavation/lining provision. Tal Ltd. were appointed in March to carry out the works which were substantially completed at year end with the new cell opened in December. Further works which have gone out to tender include Site Office development and facilities.

BRING BANKS

The expansion of the Bring Bank network in the County continued during the year with a total of 36 in place at 31 December and a further three successfully approved through the part 8 process. Details of all sites and tonnages of various materials collected at each are available on www.louthcoco.ie. Overall the increase in volumes collected is heartening and indicative of the positive approach of the general public to recycling.

Volume of Glass Collected	
2003	653 tonnes
2004	1245 tonnes
% Increase	91%

Volume of Cans Collected	
2003	29 tonnes
2004	59 tonnes
% Increase	103%

Volume of Plastic Collected	
2003	48 tonnes
2004	218 tonnes
% Increase	354%

A number of mini-bring bank centres were put in place in secondary schools throughout the County to encourage recycling and these have

Bring Banks

proved to be quite successful particularly in schools registered for the Green Flag Scheme.

A very successful mini-recycling centre was put in place in Templetown Beach during the year with a further one being proposed for Port Beach in 2005.

ENFORCEMENT

A dedicated Enforcement Section was established within the Section in October to bring more focus to the Council's enforcement role under the Waste Management Act and Litter Pollution Act. The success of the Enforcement Team will be more evident in 2005 when staff is fully in place but in the three months since its establishment it is clear that enforcement statistics will greatly improve.

LITTER MANAGEMENT

The Litter Warden Team continued to be a highly visible and very effective unit during the year. As well as enforcing the Act the Wardens were also engaged in education and awareness through a series of school visits in the County to highlight the need for good litter management.

	Fixed Penalty Notices	Prosecutions Taken	Convictions
Louth County Council	523	88	40
Drogheda Borough Council	286	19	9
Dundalk Town Council	105	1	0
Total	914	108	49

LITTER LEAGUE

A very successful inter-town/village Litter league was held during the summer season. The success of the league, and competitiveness of participants, can be measured by the fact that the centre who scored the lowest marks in the first assessment improved to the extent that it ultimately emerged as winner on completion of the league. Congratulations to Tullyallen and to all participants who demonstrated a steady improvement.

TIDY TOWNS ACTIVITY

A total of 108 Tidy Towns Groups and Residents Associations availed of the Amenity Grant Scheme to assist them with environmental management and improvement of their local areas. A very successful Tidy Estates/Districts Competition was held, the results of which were announced to a packed attendance in the Fairways Hotel in November.

Overall Winner	Knockbridge
Housing Estate Category A	Killineer Cottages
Housing Estate Category B	Papal Drive, Collon
Housing Estate Category C	St. Mary's Villas, Kilsaran
Housing Estate Category D	Sliabh Breagh, Ardee
Best Presented Football Pitch	St. Fechins GFC
Best Maintained Graveyard	Mansfieldtown Graveyard

Tidy Estates Competition

A total of 13 towns/villages in the County participated in the National Tidy Towns Competition and brought credit to our County as a result of their consistent high standard of performance.

The villages of Tallanstown, Blackrock and Dunleer as well as the town of Dundalk represented the County in the All Ireland Pride of Place Initiative and thanks and congratulations go to all four centres for their high level of participation.

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

The Louth Local Authorities School Environment Competition attracted an entry of 34 in 2004. An exceptionally high standard of participation was recorded not alone in the environmental presentation of the school but very importantly in the areas of litter and waste management together with general awareness and commitment of students.

Overall: Rural School	Monastery School, Ardee
Overall: Urban School	Realt na Mara Junior, Dundalk
Louth County Council Cat. A	Rampark National School

Louth County Council Cat. B	St. Peter's NS, Dromiskin
1st Place Drogheda	St. Brigid's NS, Bothar Brugha
1st Place Dundalk	CBS Primary, Chapel Street
Junior Environmentalist	Zoe McQuillan, Dromiskin NS
Junior Environmentalist	Andrew McCreanor, Monastery School, Ardee

A further 2 schools were awarded the prestigious Green Flag during the year bringing the total number of Green Schools in the County to an impressive 8. A total of 36 were registered for the scheme at 31 December and it is planned to advance quite a number of these to Green Flag status during 2005.

Green Flag awarded to 2 new schools

NATIONAL SPRING CLEAN

A massive clean up of County Louth took place during the month of April with community groups, schools and personnel in the local authorities combining efforts to spring clean Louth. The Local Authorities supported the voluntary effort by providing gloves, bags, skips etc. as well as undertaking a number of roadside clean-ups.

National Spring Clean

MISCELLANEOUS CAMPAIGNS

Other campaigns such as National Tree Week, Race Against Waste, Environmental Photography Competition and St. Patrick's Day Parade were also fully supported by the Environment Section during the year.

VETERINARY SERVICES

The construction of the new animal compound in Dromiskin began in April and has proceeded on schedule. Completion of the 16 kennel/4 stable compound is expected in summer 2005. The new facility will be complemented by a dedicated 'Dog Control Data Base', which monitors both dog licenses and warden activity.

The current pound was very busy during the year handling 819 dogs, up from 781 the previous year. The re-homing rate continues to improve however, up from 26% in 2003 to 27.5% in 2004. The pound also handled 22 horses, 2 cattle and 2 calves.

Dog licensing levels have maintained the high levels of the previous year, running at 7,500, and together with pound activities have generated a record income of €130,000. An immediate benefit of this income will be the provision of state of the art facilities for impounded animals with the new animal compound.

Micro-chipping of horses

A new four-wheel drive jeep was purchased this year and was part funded by the Department of Agriculture. Together with the horsebox it will aid the Control of Horses Byelaws, which saw over 30 horses micro-chipped and licensed in 2004.

Under a rolling contract between the Food Safety Authority of Ireland and Louth County Council, the County Veterinary Officer assisted by two temporary veterinary inspectors, monitor 10 meat plants and 1 abattoir in the county. This includes weekly hygiene inspections of all premises and the inspection of all animals. These premises are also licensed by the Louth County Council on a yearly basis.

The dairy farms in the county are also inspected on a yearly basis to ensure hygiene levels are maintained to the highest levels. There are currently 130 dairy farms operating in the county supplying liquid milk, down from 150 in 2003.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

FIRE SERVICES

The Cross-Border Schools Fire Safety Project, which was funded by the Peace II programme, was started in January 2004. In this project, the Northern Ireland Fire Brigade Schools Fire Safety Programme was delivered to all primary schools in County Louth.

Dundalk Fire Station roof repairs were completed in 2004.

Equipment and vehicles purchased by Louth Fire Services in 2004 included the following

a. ALP 320 (ariel ladder platform fire engine), the first of its kind in the country, capable of firefighting and rescue to a height of 32 metres. This was purchased at a cost of €475,000.
b. Upgrading of breathing apparatus equipment to new generation equipment which uses radio signals to monitor the safety of firefighters using BA. The units were purchased at a cost of €55,000.
c. Purchase of replacement Mini-Bus for transport of personnel at training and incidents at a cost of €30,000
d. Purchase of decontamination equipment for Drogheda fire Service at a cost of €25,000.
e. Rescue equipment for use at road traffic accidents (cutters and rams) were purchased for Louth County Fire Services.

Dundalk Fire Service provided recruit firefighter and breathing apparatus wearers courses and training in the use of the Aerial Ladder Platform high-reach appliance new BA equipment. Dundalk is the only Irish fire service using this BA equipment.

Drogheda Fire Service has provided pump operators and hydraulic platform courses and has developed in-house instructors in line rescue and basic life support.

DEHLG approval has been obtained for the purchase of a new fire appliance for Carlingford Fire service this year.

CIVIL DEFENCE

Members of Civil Defence did in 2004 continue to provide assistance at many high profile community events together with some of the more local events. The assistance in the form of ambulance and first aid cover is an ever increasing demand on the members who provide a very professional service with the most modern equipment available. This service was enhanced in 2004 when Civil Defence took delivery of an Automatic Electronic Defibrillator and members continue to undergo training in the use of this vital life saving equipment.

Mountain Rescue by Civil Defence

The Civil Defence Board did by way of a special grant provide funding for the replacement and upgrading of the Rigid inflatable boat (RIB) currently been used by Civil Defence as part of their Water based Search and recovery service. The boat will be located in the recently refurbished boat house (formally old fire station) in Carlingford.

Renovation to the old gaol required Civil Defence vacating the stores and communication facility, with the works now complete the communications facility is now re-established and the stores are again fully operational with the improved heating and ventilation system proving very worthwhile.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Louth County Council was awarded the National Irish Safety Organisation North East Regional Award in 2004 for excellence in safety.

There were 15 workplace accidents reported in 2004 of which 7 were reported to the Health and Safety Authority and 1 involved a member of the public.

WATER SAFETY

Louth County Council continues to promote Water Safety directly by providing Lifesaving equipment and safety signage at popular bathing places and piers. The Council provided lifeguard cover on the beach at Templetown during Summer of 2004 and hope to extend this service in 2005. We are also involved through the liaison of our Water Safety Development Officer with the County Louth Committee Irish Water Safety who provide lessons and training in advanced swimming, rescue and resuscitation techniques. These courses are held at pools in Dundalk and Gormanstown and run from May to September each year. In addition a very successful Water Safety Week was held in Gyles Quay in July 2004. Undoubtedly, the marine spectacle of the year was the IMSARC demo which was held in Greenore in May 2004. This was run by the Coastguard who displayed their Armoury of equipment and vehicles to an audience of thousands. A particular favourite on the day was the Sikorsky Rescue Helicopter along with lifeboats from both North and South of the border.