Comhairle Contae an Chláir
Clare County Council
Plean Forbatha na Leabharlanna 2016-2021
Library Development Plan 2016-2021

Charting the future 2

Comhairle Contae an Chláir
Clare County Council

Seirbhís de chuid Chomhairle Contae an Chláir
A service of Clare County Council

Charting the Future 2

Clare County Library Development Plan
2016-2021

adopted by Clare County Council
at March 2017 meeting

Contents

INTRODUCTION

The Clare County Library Development Plan follows on from the previous plan launched in October 2010 covering the period 2010-2015. During this time there have been many advances made within the library service and a number of positive outcomes achieved. The present plan takes its direction from a number of national strategies (Opportunities for all 2013-2017), and local ones, namely, Clare County Council's Corporate Plan (2016-2020), Clare County Council's draft Development Plan (2017-2023), and the local Economic and Community Plan (2016-2021). The strategy is also based on the attainment and maintenance of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government's Public Library Standards and Benchmarks issued in April 2015. The plan will provide the basis for input to the Local Authority Service Delivery plan and form part of the Social Development Directorate's work plan for the coming years.

It is well recognized that Clare County Library is one of the lead Library Services outside of Dublin with an established network of branch libraries, a well trained staff complement, developed programmes in the areas of children's services, IT, reader development and Local Studies. This plan/strategy charts a clear approach to achieving and maintaining a Library Service which is of a high standard, adaptive to change and future-proofed. Special emphasis was placed on marketing and promotion in the last plan which will continue to be developed in this new one.

Clare County Council welcomes this strategy and is committed to seeing all targets attained over the lifetime of the plan. In particular, the Council is looking forward to the re-location of the public library in Ennis onto the Glór site and to all aspects of enhanced service this will bring to the people of the county.

Cllr Bill Chambers
Mhéara

Cllr Pat Hayes
Cathaoirleach, Cultural, Arts,
Community, Recreation & Amenity SPC

Pat Dowling
Chief Executive

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Clare County Library has achieved a number of key goals in the last Library Development Plan (2010-2015) with the addition of a refurbished branch in Kilkee and advances in literacy promotion, making collections accessible, inculcating a reading and book culture in the county and successfully promoting its services and programmes to an expanding audience of users. The present plan has been prepared during a period of immense change for libraries with a number of key national initiatives reaching fruition at time of publication – these include the introduction of a single library management system and consequent changes in library operations, a new national book distribution service, the advent of Open Libraries and a national stock tender. Staff support and commitment was integral to the success of the last strategy and is again paramount to the success of this one.

The mission statement for Clare County Library encapsulates a service that is defined as not a building or an institution but a resource to be used by people for information, learning, culture and imagination – thereby improving the intellectual and cultural quality of life of the community.

Four core strategic objectives provide the roadmap for continued development of the service in Clare:
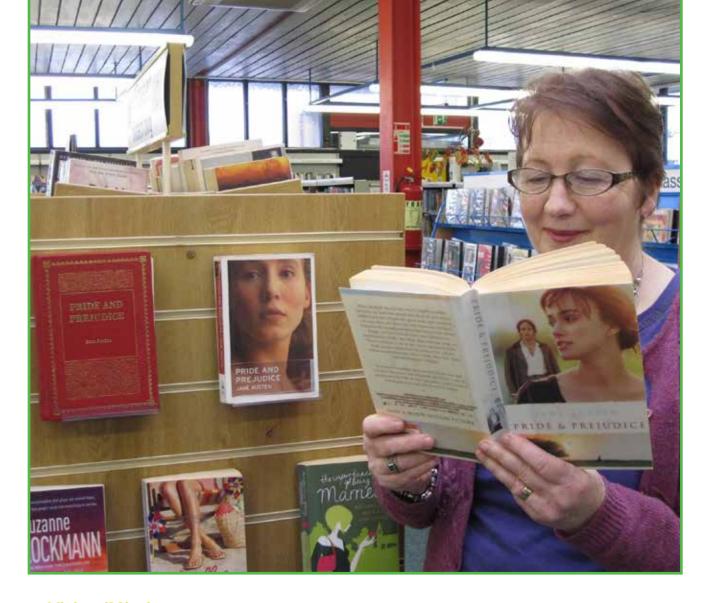*   **To foster and promote a reading and learning culture**
*   **To make our libraries and services accessible to all**
*   **To support cultural and community expression**
*   **To pursue a programme of infrastructural improvements and refurbishment of buildings**

All aspects of the core strategies are underpinned by commitments to training and development of staff, collaboration and partnerships with enabling agencies, on-going marketing and promotion of services and funding allocation as agreed by Clare County Council.

A total of 31 specific targets are set which encompass 18 of the standards outlined in the Department's "Public Library Standards and Benchmarks" – these relate to the areas of literacy and learning, services to schools and the business community, technological support, community engagement, local studies and age friendly libraries.

The strategy provides the focus for the PMDS process in the library service over the lifetime of the plan and will be reviewed on an annual basis through the relevant SPC.

1. Vision/Mission

Clare County Library is not a building or an institution but a resource to be used by people for information, learning, culture and the imagination thereby improving the intellectual and cultural quality of life of the community.

2. Strategic objectives
To foster and promote a reading and learning culture
To make our libraries and services accessible to all
To support cultural and community expression
To pursue a programme of infrastructural improvements and refurbishment of buildings

3. Values and Principles
The Library Development Plan is guided by the values and principles of its parent organisation, Clare County Council, and has adopted the values and principles outlined in the Corporate Plan – specifically in the areas of delivering a quality service focussed on the needs of customers and citizens, promoting social inclusion and participation of all communities in an effort to combat marginalization and to enhance democracy.
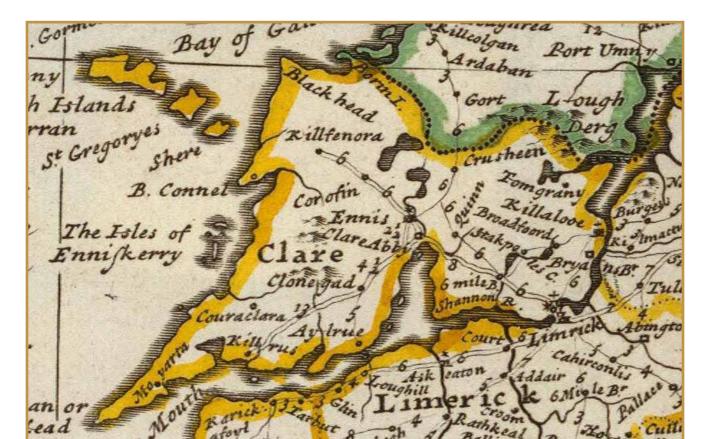
4. Strategic Analysis

Clare County Library serves a population of 118,627 (Census, 2016) spread over an area of 1,330 square miles (3,450 km$_2$). The service operates through 15 branch libraries (9 full- time, 6 part-time) and a Local Studies Centre. Full time libraries are located at Ennis, Ennistymon, Kilkee, Killaloe, Kilrush, Milltown Malbay, Scariff, Shannon and Sixmilebridge. Part-time branches are located at Corofin, Kildysart, Kilmihil, Lisdoonvarna, Tulla and Newmarket-on-Fergus.
Membership of Clare County Library is free since January, 2016 and internet usage is not dependant on library membership. A wide variety of stock is available including books, magazines, newspapers, audiovisual, music and film and, more recently, access to a broad range of e-resources such as e-books, e-audio, e-reference, e-learning and e-magazines. Most branches operate a book club and the library service is closely allied to the Ennis Book Club Festival which takes place every March in Ennis. The award winning library website is expansive and covers Clare history, archaeology, folklore, genealogy, people, places, community information, literature, photographic material, online maps, digital books and a music archive. Social networking is accommodated through the Library blog, Facebook, on-line forums and Twitter. The library website is also a resource used for the Arts, Heritage, the Museum and Archives services.
The Library service has overall responsibility for the Arts, Museum and Archives Services and works in collaboration with the Heritage Officer and sections of the Community & Tourism Directorate. In comparison therefore to other counties the integration of the Arts, Museum and Archives services has led to a well established cultural resource and service for Clare. This allows for a diverse and high standard of service in the area of both arts and library provision.
In 2016 the process of updating categories of older stock began with an increase in bookfund from €187,000 to €287,000. In 2017 the budget for the operation of the library service is €4.05m which includes the cost of staff and service support costs and a continuance of increased bookfund of €287,000. There are 55 staff employed by Clare County Library and the library works in partnership with a full time Arts Officer, Museum Curator and County Archivist. The number of visitors to all branches in 2015 was 464,450, an increase of 3,600 on 2014 figures with a total stock issue of 522,632. This consisted of 159,124 adult fiction books issued and 115,247 non-fiction books issued. A total of 247,878 books were issued to children. The number of e-books issued was 383. There were 50,513 hours of internet usage recorded.

See – appendix 1 for tabular statistics (issues, registration, Wi Fi, internet, visits to branches)

5. External Environment Analysis

5.1 Community Profile

Extensive external analysis has been captured in the Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 and forms the backdrop to this section. This document has drawn on a number of relevant documents at national, regional and local level (Clare County Development Plan 2011-2017 and a number of local areas plans) and is therefore deemed sufficient in its scope and remit to inform this strategy.

The EU's strategy for the coming decade, known as Europe 2020, aims to create a Europe that is smart, sustainable and inclusive, delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. Ireland has committed to achieving the EU 2020 target as documented in the "National Reform Programme Ireland 2015" specifically in the areas of employment, education and training, thereby reducing levels of poverty. Over the period 1981-2011 the national and regional populations grew by 33% and 25% respectively and Clare's population grew from 87,567 to 117,196. In Census 2016 this is now at 118,627. Ennis Municipal District (MD) experienced the highest population growth (66%) of the four Municipal Districts, increasing from 19,907 in 1981 to 33,010 in 2011. Shannon MD increased by 52% and Killaloe MD by 39%. However, West Clare MD only achieved 2.6% population growth over the same period. The strong trend in urbanization has resulted in almost 50% of the county's population residing in towns and villages. The villages of Liscannor, Quin and Sixmilebridge experienced population growth in excess of 50% while the villages of Corofin, Kilfenora and Killaloe had population growth in excess of 25%. Only five towns and villages experienced population decline.

In 2011, at national and regional level, the youngest age group (0-14) constituted 21.4% and 20.9% respectively compared to 22.2% for Clare. A greater percentage of Clare's population was young (0-14) than was the case nationally or regionally. In terms of late Secondary and third level age groups (15-24) this group constituted 11.8% of the county's population. Within the older age group (75+ yrs), 5.2% of County Clare's population fall into this grouping. The employment rates of working age (15-64) males was 63.7% compared to 62.5% nationally and for females this was 55.4% compared to 55.2% nationally. The percentage of the national workforce with 3rd level qualifications was 40.9% compared to 38.4% for Clare. While females accounted for 47% of the overall workforce in 2011, they accounted for 57.5% of the workforce with a 3rd level qualification.

At county level, the number of workers engaged in the different sectors in 1981 and 2011 showed a 57% decline in the agriculture sector and a 300% increase in the numbers involved in "other services sectors" and whilst agriculture accounted for 30% of the workforce in 1981, it accounted for only 8% in 2011. The importance of manufacturing employment declined from 21% to 15% and employment in construction from 9% to 5% in the same time period. As a result of a strong shift to service sectors (transport, public admin, professional services and other services) these sectors accounted for 52% of all employment in 2011 compared to 28% in 1981.

Between 2008 and 2013, people "at risk of income poverty" (whose income was less than 60% of the median income) increased from 14.4% to 15.2% having fallen from 16.5% in 2012 thus affecting one in seven people. One in three people who were "unemployed" or "renting below market rate" were at risk of income poverty. In 2011, the national disability rate was 13% and 12.6% for Clare. The disability rate varies from 5.3% (0-14 years) to 10.6% (15-64 years) to 36.5% (65+). At county level, one third of people 65+ live alone.
(Local Economic & Community Plan, 2016-2021)

5. 2 PESTLE

The PESTLE is used to identify key relevant factors that relate to external environment and are a "snapshot" in time.

P - Political

The political situation at time of writing is challenging with a minority government in power supported by a number of Independents and a main opposition party– with an agreement to support the Government for three successive budgets. Both of these larger parties have 234 and 262 councillors respectively within the local government system which provides a strong basis for any upcoming election. Issues of high priority both nationally and locally are housing, health and the economy.

E -The economy

The most recent three census periods have been typified on the basis of the sectors that contributed most to GDP growth. The period 1996-2002 was typified as "export driven growth", the period 2002-2006 as "construction driven growth" and the period 2006-2011 as the recession period. In March, 2016 preliminary figures from the CSO showed that GDP increased by 7.8% for the whole of 2015 – the fastest pace of growth since 2000. The figures showed that the manufacturing industry recorded an annual 14.2% increase in value terms, while building and construction recorded an 8.8% rise. The distribution, transport, software and communication sector increased by 8.7% while the agriculture sector increased by 6.4%, and other services by 4.3%. However, public administration and defence recorded an annual decline of 2.6%. The CSO also said that import growth of 16.4% outpaced that of exports at 13.8%. However, Merrion economist, Alan Quaid, advised on erring on the side of caution "an increasing uncertain global climate means we feel it prudent to be cautious in respect of the likely 2016 outturn – but even taking a conservative approach implies GDP growth of about 5% should be readily achieved this year". www.rte.ie/news/business 2016

S -Social change

"Europe 2020" aims to create a Europe that is smart, sustainable and inclusive, delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. Ireland has committed to achieving targets as documented in the "National Reform Programme, Ireland, 2015" in the areas of employment (by 2020, the employment rate among 20-64 year olds is aimed to increase from the current 64% to between 69% and 71%). Within education, the percentage of those 18-24 year olds with lower secondary education or less and not in further education/training is aimed to be 8% (currently 10.6%). The percentage of the 30-34 age group who have completed 3rd level education will be at least 60% (currently 49.9%) and the number experiencing "consistent poverty" will be 2% or less of the population (6.3% in 2010).
(Local Economic & Community Plan, 2016-2021)

T-Technological change

In 2013, Gartner concluded its Symposium/ITxpo gathering tens of thousands of IT executives in the US. Among the most anticipated aspects of this gathering were the ruminations regarding IT trends. The top ten strategic technology trends for 2014 included: mobile device diversity, mobile apps and applications, the internet of everything, hybrid cloud and IT as service broker, Cloud/Client architecture, the era of personal cloud, software defined Anything, web-scale IT, Smart machines and 3-D printing. Deloitte's annual Tech Trends reports examine the ever-evolving technology landscape and the trends that have the potential to transform business, government and society. The 2015 report examines eight current technology trends, ranging from the way some organizations are using application programming interfaces to extend services and create new revenue streams, to the dramatic impact connectivity and analytics are having on digital marketing and the demands associated with changing IT skills. "Numbers employed in the ICT sector in Ireland have risen by 40% since 2012. As it is, 7,000 jobs in the sector are currently unfilled in Ireland and 10,000 more potential jobs are under threat in the short-term, thanks to

a skills shortage. By 2020, it is anticipated that demand in the sector will be double the levels experienced today"
(FIT IT Skills Audit 2014)
(Gartner: Top 10 strategic technology trends for 2014 – www.forbes.com) and (DeLoitte Tech Trends 2015, technology service insights)

L- Legal change

The primary legislation relating to the provision of Library services is the Local Government Act 2001. in addition, three blueprints for the future development of library services "Branching Out – a new public library service", (1998), "Branching Out – future directions" (2008) and "Opportunities for All" (2013) have impacted on the strategic, financial and service delivery of the public library system in Ireland in an attempt to enable the service to continue to develop in line with international practice and user expectation. Within this framework, in April, 2015 the Dept of Environment, Community and Local Government published a set of standards and benchmarks – these are intended to measure performance across a range of objectives derived from "Opportunities for All". Other legislation pertaining to public library provision is in the areas of health and safety, safeguarding and care of children, accessibility, Irish language and all aspects of copyright, data protection and intellectual property rights.

E- Environmental change

A NESC publication in June 2014 outlined that Ireland has a high level of households where no-one is working or has very limited access to work. Nearly one quarter of households in Ireland can be described as jobless compared to a European average of 11%. A distinguishing feature of these households is the likelihood that they contain children, with children making up nearly a third of those in jobless households. These households have a high risk of poverty, with the danger of transmitting joblessness and poverty across generations. The reasons for household joblessness are complex and the report suggests that the issue will not be resolved through a single solution but through packages of support including: adult literacy, child development, family supports, addiction services, disability services, housing, education and training, public employment, community employment – as well as engagement with employers.
(National Economic and Social Council Report 137: Jobless Households – an exploration of the issues, June 2014)

6. SWOT

Strengths

- A long tradition of commitment by Clare County Council to the library service with a good countywide presence of branches strategically positioned in centres of strong population growth.
- A dedicated and committed staff who possess a deep level of expertise and experience
- At or above the national average for opening hours
- A high level of activity in full-time branches (book clubs, programme of annual activities, book promotions, etc). Clare Co. Library has been an award winning service in the Chambers Ireland Excellence Awards for the Children's Reading Challenge
- Efficient weekly delivery service via the library van between branches leading to a fast turnaround of new stock in branches and an enhanced book request service to the public
- The county book stock collection is wide and deep with strong collections in all full-time branches due to a rigorous selection process
- High level of exploitation of stock e.g. adult and children's book promotions, library blog, web OPAC and book clubs
- Award winning library website with 24 hour access to library resources, with strong digital content, www.clarelibrary.ie
- A highly developed Local Studies Centre with a strong reputation
- A dedicated Children's/Teenage Librarian working closely with the local schools and teachers
- A commitment to Marketing and outreach programmes

Weaknesses

- A weak staff structure under grade 5 levels means that there are few library staff at library assistant level or senior library assistant level. A comparison of staff at lower grades with Kerry County Library shows Kerry having a staff complement of 26 at either Senior Library Assistant or Library Assistants grades. This compares to Clare's 15 staff at Senior Library Assistant/ Library Assistant Officer grades
- Inability to create promotional opportunities for staff particularly at lower grades
- The age and condition of the older library buildings: DeValera Library (1975); Kilrush and Ennistymon Libraries (1981); Newmarket-on Fergus Library (1982) and Shannon Library (1983) are an ongoing challenge for resources
- Lack of accessibility to library buildings which includes inadequate parking facilities, lack of accessible doors, inadequate circulation spaces in some branches and the large number of non-ergonomically designed library reception desks
- Book fund below national average and not close to "Opportunities for All" target of €3.77 per capita, expenditure per capita in 2015 was €1.60 and €2.40 in 2016.
- Lack of library coverage in some areas of the county – North and South-East
- A dispersed staff operating late opening and Saturday makes face-to face training difficult and opportunities for all staff to meet are infrequent and rare.

Opportunities

- Opportunities for All – Government endorsed blueprint for development of the library service nationally 2013-2017 and any subsequent strategy
- Targeted promotion and marketing - Opportunity to expand library provision to some sectors of the population (teenagers, housebound, travellers, literacy students and the elderly) and respond to gender/age imbalance. Nationally, there is under usage by teenagers, disabled and the elderly. These provide target groups to work with.
- The recent introduction of e-resources as a national programme for all Library Authorities enhances library provision
- Collaboration with other agencies and initiatives, e.g. Solas, e-Learning, HSE, VEC, Education Training Boards, Primary and Secondary schools, age friendly initiatives.
- "The Digital Scoreboard" which compares how countries are doing against one another, shows that Ireland lies 20th in broadband take up despite city-based services being amongst the best in Europe. This provides an opportunity for all libraries nationally to fill this gap.
- The new national LMS, Sierra, provides an opportunity to exploit both book and e-resources if managed effectively.
- To work more closely with the Arts Service, Archivist, Heritage Officer in collaborative programming as experienced during the 1916/2016 national initiative which was led predominately by Library Services nationally
- To increase bookfund to acquire the benchmark of €3.77 per capita
- To adopt innovative approaches to service provision e.g. RFID self service and other library automated procedures

Threats

- Opening hours no longer feasible with present staffing quota
- Poor perception by public on how the library service has changed
- Other recreational media vying for people's attention
- Academic culture in schools means that teenagers and young adults move away from reading for pleasure
- Poor levels of literacy nationally
- Recent developments nationally means the library budget is stretched to accommodate a diverse range of requirements, there is also the prospect that a national tender may endanger any local autonomy over stock purchase and provision.
- A homogenous approach to library provision nationally does not take account of the unique aspects of library provision locally.

7. Internal Environment Analysis

It is imperative that most customer focused services test where they are at with regard to public perception and client satisfaction on a periodic basis. National public library user surveys were conducted in 2003 and 2007 which revealed feedback on a number of aspects of service including opening hours, choice of books, computer usage, attractiveness of buildings and how often library clients visited their local libraries. The results for Clare were analysed in the last Library Development Plan 2010-2014. In 2014 a Clare County Library non-user survey was carried out with 195 respondents divided almost equally between male and female and representing a wide spectrum of ages from teens to senior citizens.

Almost 100 % knew where their local library was and 88% had visited their local library at some stage, 50% did not know whether other family members used a local library or not.
On being asked what items and services they thought were available in Clare libraries, all respondents stated books and 87% were aware of free internet. A high percentage of respondents, 69%, knew of the availability of newspapers and 63% were aware of book clubs in libraries. An average of 57% of respondents knew about local history resources, magazines, public events and music CDs, while just 49% were aware of the availability of movie DVDs.

Previous membership of a library was high at 67%, and 95% thought libraries were either 'very important' or 'somewhat important' to their local communities.

When asked their reasons for not currently using their local library, the three principal reasons given were "I don't have time" 36%, "I buy what I read" 33% and "I just don't think about libraries" 32%. 14% of respondents stated that they don't like reading, while 8% thought library opening hours were inconvenient. A small percentage (5%) stated that libraries didn't have what they need, 3.5% cited "no library nearby" as a reason, and just 1% of respondents expressed that they had received poor service in the past.
In 2016 in preparation for the present library strategy a smaller random survey of 24 respondents was carried out (16 non-users and 8 users) among Clare County Council staff. Non users were in the 36-65 age group and consisted of 4 males and 12 females. All knew where their local library was located with just one responding that they had never been inside it. About half had other members of the family using the library although they remained non-users themselves. All knew that books were a major category of stock in the library but knowledge on availability of magazines, music CDs and DVDs dropped to about half. Slightly more than half knew that newspapers were available in the library. There was a much stronger awareness of the availability of the free internet service, events, book clubs and local history resources. All but 2 respondents had been previous library members. All felt that libraries were between "somewhat important" and "very important". A total of 12 did not use e-resources but 4 did. To the question – why do you not use your local library? – half buy their own books, half don't have time, with two answering as well that they "just don't think about libraries".

7.1 Position within Local Authority Structure

Clare Library Service is a service of Clare County Council. There are presently 5 Directorates with the Library Service sitting under the Directorate of Social Development. There are working relationships with most parts of the Council – e.g. Procurement, Housing for maintenance of library buildings, Community and Tourism, Finance, Corporate Services and IT. The County Librarian presently reports into the Cultural, Arts, Community, Recreation and Amenity Services SPC which meets 4 times per year. There are also strong working relationships with various individual staff members – Arts Officer, Archivist, Heritage and Conservation Officers, HR Officer, Communications Officer, Council Architect, Enterprise Officer, Museum Curator and the Health and Safety Officer.
See: appendix 2 (Directorate, position of Library Service)

7.2 Existing infrastructure/asset management

Clare Library Service operates through a network of 15 branch libraries which have been established in population centres of between 3,255 to 35,731. The locations are geographically spread to give maximum service delivery to the county with only two areas lacking any immediate service – south east Clare bordering on Limerick City and north Clare. There is no mobile library service. Full time branches are located in Ennis (1975), Ennistymon (1981), Kilrush (1981), Shannon (1983), Killaloe (1994), Milltown Malbay (1995), Sixmilebridge (2001), Scariff (2007), and Kilkee (2012).

Part time branches are established in Newmarket-on-Fergus (1982), Tulla (1985), Corofin (1992), Lisdoonvarna (1999), Kildysart (2003) and Kilmihil (2003).

The Local Studies Centre opened in a vernacular style building adjacent to the De Valera Public Library in Ennis in 1988. The branch network has been established through a combination of Department and Council's own resources. Some branches were established in co-operation with a number of Fás initiatives during the 1980s to early 2000s (Sixmilebridge, Tulla, Corofin, Lisdoonvarna). On the whole, the earlier Department-funded buildings – Ennistymon, Kilrush, Shannon and Newmarket-on-Fergus have remained somewhat structurally sound but, with changing standards around accessibility and parking, have lost pace with modern demands. Recent initiatives have been established to replace Library reception desks, upgrade interiors and work to create inviting spaces for the public. However, there are ongoing requirements around structural work which will continue over the next few years in these older buildings. DeValera Library, Ennis is now deemed end of life and subject to flooding. A new County Library incorporating a Local Studies Centre is at design stage with an anticipated opening date of 2019/20. In most cases, there have been ongoing requirements for intervention with roofs and general wear and tear on the fabric of the older buildings.

Scariff and Kilkee are newly established buildings with adequate parking and accessibility and modern interiors. A number of branches are leased premises: Killaloe, Kilmihil, Kildysart, Miltown Malbay, Corofin and Lisdoonvarna. In 2015, the total stock complement was 334,456.
See: appendix 3 (Library Branch Network)

7.3 Existing Technology

The technological hardware resources presently in situ in the Library Service consists of 150 PCs (87 of which are dedicated Public Access Internet PCs), 19 receipt printers, 29 laser printers, 15 firewalls, 3 servers, 16 switches, 15 modems. There are 3 flatbed scanners, 1 handheld scanner and a larger scanner located in Library HQ used for scanning photographs. There are 9 photocopiers. For insurance purposes, hardware assets are calculated as in the region of €150,000.

7.4   Existing Collections/Resources

Clare County Library Service has operated a stock collection policy for a number of years. An analysis of county wide stock was carried out in 2015 where age of stock was calculated from date of purchase. It was established that 65% of adult fiction was greater than 5 years old, the percentage of adult non-fiction greater than 5 years old was 79% – this is acceptable in some categories, however, overall a conservative purchasing policy has existed over the lifetime of the previous plan. The percentage of children's stock over 5 years old was 71% – there is much attrition with children's stock particularly in the younger age groups (picture books, early readers, etc) - replenishment of this stock is vital for a robust service to schools and for children in general. The percentage of DVDs over 5 years old was 38% – these are particularly subject to much wear and tear, the collection is small and only available in branches which have a security system in place. DVD issues are high comparative to the size of the collection. Music stock comprises many genres, some of a classical and traditional nature with 78% of all music stock older than 5 years, this is within acceptable levels.
The intention going forward is to be part of a national tender for all items of stock commencing in 2017– this has begun with an issue of tender for e-resources (e-books, e-magazines, e-journals, e-newspapers, e-reference and e-learning resources). To date, issues of non-book items in Clare have been low but with additional marketing and promotion it is expected that this will increase in the future. To what extent this will increase is difficult to assess. The commitment to €3.77 per capita remains the target benchmark in the national strategy for libraries - to be reached within the next 5 years.

The bookfund had decreased substantially from a high of €303,169 in 2008 (this included a school grant of €58,263) to €187,000 in 2015. The years of the previous Library Development Plan (2010-2016) saw increased usage and visits to libraries at a time when the bookfund was decreasing year on year. This put demands on stock supply which has been difficult to meet particularly in certain categories – children's and adult fiction. An extra grant of €100,000 in 2016 will see a rebalance in age of stock but additional funding will be required as the service advances towards the benchmark of €3.77 per capita.
See: appendix 4 (Bookfund, total stock, age of stock)

7.5 Existing Services, Service Delivery and Performance

Over the course of the previous library development plan (2010-2015) issues increased for the first three years of the plan reaching a high of 567,129 stock issues in 2012. Likewise, library membership increased (on the whole) in line with issues, reaching a high of 19,964 with the opening of the newly refurbished library at Cultúrlann Sweeney, Kilkee. Internet usage declined consistently year on year over this time with an increase only showing again in 2015 with the introduction of Wi Fi to two branches. Visits to branches over the five year period were subject to both increase and decline – explained in part by losses in use through temporary closures in part-time branches and curtailing of opening hours due to limited staff resources. It is important to note also that the bookfund fell each successive year from 2010 until a slight recovery in 2015. It is of significance that issues have now levelled off at 2009 levels, as has library membership, but visits to branches were at an all time high in 2015 which is a strong reflection on the strength of programming and marketing of the service.
See: appendix 5 (visits to branches)

7.6   Existing Workforce

Clare County Library is staffed by a complement of 9 staff at professional grades from County Librarian to Assistant Librarian (November, 2016). The remaining staff of 46 consists of 9 staff at grade 5 level, 8 staff at grade 4 level/analogous, 9 staff at grade 3 level/analogous, 8 Branch Librarians, 10 Library Attendants, 1 Driver and 1 Driver Assistant.
See: appendix 6 (current staffing structure)

7.7   Local Authority, Community and National Collaboration and Partnerships

Clare County Library is embedded within the structure of its parent organization, Clare County Council and has worked collaboratively on various cross directorate initiatives relating to tourism and community projects including the Gathering (2013), the Brian Ború Millennium celebrations (2014), 1916 commemorations (2015/16), Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann (2016). It has supported the work of the Ennis Book Club Festival for over a decade and likewise, the Merriman Summer School. In recent years it has worked collaboratively with Cuimhneamh an Chláir on oral history projects. The library service also works closely with the network of Primary and Secondary Schools in the county on literacy support and reading initiatives and with the community section of Clare County Council on the Age Friendly County Strategy (see section 9.4 for range of groups and agencies).

7.8   Funding

The County Council's investment in the library service can be assessed under the following categories: 1) staff costs – salaries and wages, training and subsistence; 2) operational expenses – expenditure required to provide the service to the public including utilities, essential maintenance of buildings and equipment and rent; 3) Materials and Stock – books, multimedia, newspapers, journals, e-resources, etc; 4) Activities and promotions –yearly schedule of programmed events and activities; 5) Improvements and Developments – general maintenance and improvement of premises and facilities. Total average expenditure over the years 2010-2015 was €3,871,083. The largest portion of this is on staffing, €2,172,901 and operational costs €253,696. During the recessionary period the amount available for new stock has declined with some value accruing due to competitive tendering from 2013 onwards.

8. Strategies

1916 Standing Stones, Shannon

The previous Library strategy "Charting the future: Connecting with the past" had objectives in the areas of book culture and reading, lifelong learning and access to information, fostering programmes for children and teenagers, accessibility, collecting, managing and preserving the culture of the county in all its forms, marketing and promotion of libraries and pursuing a programme of infrastructural improvements and refurbishment of library buildings. The present strategy is guided by the Public Libr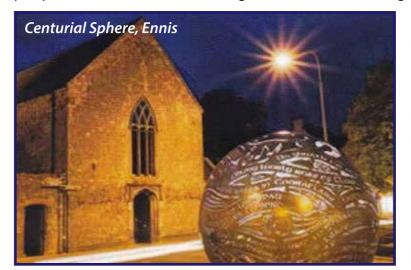ary Standards and Benchmarks issued in April 2015, which provides the measuring and monitoring tool for objectives outlined in the Government's national Library Strategy "Opportunities for All" (2013). Clare County Council seeks to ensure these benchmarks are reached whilst also supporting and strengthening the unique aspects of the library service in Clare. The strategy is also guided by Clare County Council's Corporate Plan (2015-2019) particularly in the areas of customer focus, inclusivity, partnership and collaboration, innovation and adaptation in service delivery.

Clare County Library will strategically work to meet the current and potential needs of all of the citizens of the county in the following core strategy areas:

1. Foster and support a reading and learning culture
2. Make our libraries and services accessible to all
3. Support cultural and community expression

In meeting these commitments Clare County Library will deliver on its mission statement "Clare County Library is not a building or an institution but a resource to be used by people for information, learning, culture and the imagination thereby improving the

Centurial Sphere, Ennis

intellectual and cultural quality of life of the community". All aspects of the three core strategies identified are underpinned by commitments to training and development of staff, collaboration and partnerships with enabling agencies, on-going marketing and promotion of services and funding allocations as agreed by Clare County Council.

8.1 Why reading and learning are prioritized in this strategy:

Over the course of the previous Library Development Plan (2010-2015) 3,251,756 items of stock were issued to 110,395 members of the public – book stock still remaining a strong component of the reading culture of the county and at the heart of library provision. Reading for information, leisure, ideas and creativity is the staple of a literate society and it has long been recognized that reading for pleasure is more important for children's cognitive development than their parent's level of education (The Reading Agency, UK). Likewise, learning in all its forms is at the core of library provision – in recent years further advanced through the provision of free access to the internet and Wi Fi and the recognition of digital literacy as a necessary skill in modern life. Lifelong learning is defined as "all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective". It is believed that self motivated learning at any age enhances social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development and leads to self sustainability and employability.
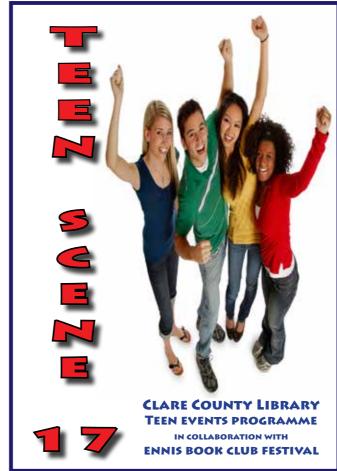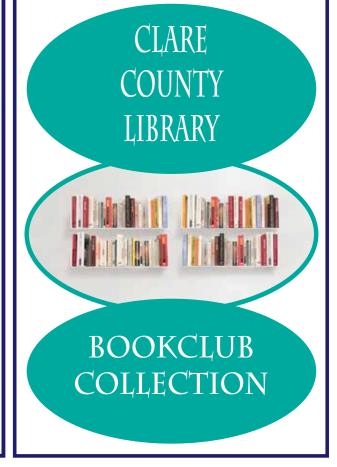
Aims

Reading

8.1.1 To progress towards the recommended per capita stock target of €3.77 in order to increase the range and comprehensiveness of our bookstock and non-book materials (Standard 4.1.2)*

8.1.2 Clare County Library's collection policy will be reviewed to include references to multi-lingual collections, materials in alternative formats, e-content and assistive technology aids in an effort to introduce readers to new materials and promote inclusivity (Standard 4.1.1)*

8.1.3 The existing collection will be maximized through book promotions, reading guides and themed reading lists

8.1.4 Continue to participate in national and international reading related events such as World Book Day, One county, one book, Africa Day, Summer stars for children, bibliotherapy, etc

8.1.5 Continue to support the network of book clubs in the county and the work of the Ennis Book Club Festival

8.1.6 To promote and market the benefits provided through the adoption of the new National Library Management System (Sierra) – in particular, the supply of e-books, e-magazines, e-audiobooks, e-reference, e-newspapers and e-learning.

8.1.7 To monitor the new stock resource sharing initiative with other libraries brought about through the adoption of Sierra

In the Department document "Opportunities for All" 2013-2017 a number of key standards and benchmarks have been identified which are adopted as objectives in this Plan

Learning

8.1.8 To implement the national policy of automatic registration for children born in Ireland during the lifetime of the strategy (Standard 3)*

8.1.9 To work in co-operation with the local LEO, Intreo offices and enterprise stakeholder bodies to deliver a programme of business information activities and support to business, enterprise and job seeking where possible (Standard 4.6.1)*

8.1.10 To promote and support literacy development for all ages (Standard 4.4.1)*

8.1.11 To deliver a support service to both Primary and Secondary Schools (Standard 4.5.1)*

8.1.12 To actively engage with early childcare bodies (Standard 4.5.2)*

8.1.13 Where practicable to provide learning spaces and support for IT skills development (Standard 4.7.3)*

8.1.14 To provide access to a range of on-line and in-library information resources (Standard 4.2.1)*

TEEN SCENE 17

CLARE COUNTY LIBRARY
TEEN EVENTS PROGRAMME
IN COLLABORATION WITH
ENNIS BOOK CLUB FESTIVAL

CLARE COUNTY LIBRARY

BOOKCLUB COLLECTION

8.2 Why accessibility and inclusivity are prioritized in this strategy

Good library design ensures that buildings are functional, easy to use and economical to operate but overall are adaptable, accessible spaces for civic use. Nowhere else is a community space expected to adapt to the demands of usage from all age groups than in a public library, allowing for safe and secure leisure and learning environments all under one roof. In Clare we are equally as challenged by our older buildings in bringing them up to accessible standards as we are by the extra services required of our newer ones. In Clare 12 service points from a total of 16 are pre-2000 buildings i.e. 75% of all library buildings date from 1975-1999. These have created challenges for both staff and public alike and require adequately funded maintenance and upgrade programmes on an ongoing basis. The upgrading of library spaces began in the last library development programme and will continue in this one. Building an inclusive society is a key priority of the government, delivering universal free access to one consistent national library service is seen as a way of providing this. We in Clare are being challenged to provide access to physical buildings, to extend the borders of traditional library provision with the concept of the Open Library, to engage in collaborative resource sharing with the new LMS (Sierra), to develop digital content, to offer a 24/7 service to online resources and to programme and market our libraries in order to create sustainable, inclusive societies.

Accessibility

8.2.1 To strive to make our buildings safe, welcoming and accessible to all by continuing to maintain and upgrade our library service points

8.2.2 To ensure that all new buildings designed during the period 2016-2021 are fully accessible for people with physical, sensory or intellectual difficulties

8.2.3 To devise programmes to attract those least likely to use our libraries to become active members

8.2.4 To make appropriate provision for children and teenagers with regard to dedicated spaces and stock provision

8.2.5 To increase access to collections through a planned digitization programme (Standard 4.3.3)*

Inclusion

8.2.6 To support and programme events to promote cultural inclusivity e.g. Africa Day, Polish Cultural Festival, etc

8.2.7 To provide space and learning materials for those whom English is not their first language.

8.2.8 To promote and support literacy development for all ages as a core function of our service (Standard 4.4.1)*

8.2.9 To continue to programme Age Friendly related activities and support the County Age Friendly Strategy (Standard 4.9.1)*

8.2.10 To develop an assistive technology collection for children who have been diagnosed with a medical or intellectual condition

8.2.11 To collaborate with the Rural Development Directorate to deliver Wi-Fi connectivity in every branch library (Standard 4.7.3)*

8.3 Why cultural and community expression is prioritized in this strategy

2016 has seen the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the 1916 Rising and the Department of An Taoiseach has placed both the Library profession and Library Services at the centre of this important and pivotal moment in Ireland's history with many Library Services tasked with leading and co-ordinating local 1916/2016 county programmes. This is evidence of the recognition now given to the Library Service as a cultural space with the skills and "know how" to reach out to community groups in a responsive and engaging manner. Likewise, our Local Studies Departments hold unique resources making up the cultural landscape of each county – written, photographic, oral and musical. Resources include maps, microfiche and microfilm, digital and audio formats and web based applications. The importance of supporting and maintaining this service must never be underestimated as it contributes to the cultural tourism of the county, supports community identity, preserves memories and is the legacy aspect of every library service in the country.

Culture

8.3.1 To develop a Local Studies curation strategy and include this in the collections development policy (Standard 4.3.1)*

8.3.2 To increase access to the collection through a digitization programme (Standard 4.3.2)*

8.3.3 Within the context of the new Library for Ennis – to develop an annual programme of exhibitions and events to promote the Local Studies collection (Standard 4.3.4)*

Community

8.3.4 Through our "outreach" activities to continue to find the most appropriate ways to serve our local community.

8.3.5 To engage with the Local Community Development Committee to strengthen community engagement and partnership (Standard 4.8.1)*

8.3.6 To continue to offer a wide range of themed programmes – to encourage and enhance library usage (Standard 4.8.2)*

Roadmap to achieving our aims:

9. Capital Development

The aims and objectives outlined from 8.1.1 to 8.3.6 consist of 31 specific targets to achieving a better library service, some build on programmes already in place whilst the remainder are targeted at attaining the Department's Standards and Benchmarks as set out in April 2015. Key to library advancement in this plan is the establishment of a new County Library at the Glór site in Ennis. Within the period 2016-2021 it is planned to bring 3 separate services together under one roof to attain a new vibrant face for the cultural services in Clare. The purpose built County Library which will open as a 24/7 service in circa 2019 is a county wide resource capable of showcasing all that is innovative and dynamic in modern library service delivery. Clare County Council believes that a new County Library will further advance the civic, cultural, social and economic role of the library service. The estimated cost of the new County Library is in the region of €8.6m

9.1 Well trained and committed Library staff

A national workforce plan for libraries is under negotiation at the present time. Since 2009, a total of 10 staff have retired or resigned from Clare County Library. Presently the staff complement is 55 as at November, 2016 – with the result that a number of service points have had to reduce hours and there is constant pressure on HQ staff to provide relief to the branch network. Attempts to automate some aspects of service through RFID, PC Reservations, Surfbox, etc have led to limited success in filling in gaps in a service that is highly dependent on frontline staff and interface with the public. Clare County Council is committed to training and development of staff to ensure that there is continued investment and support in staff development (Standard 6.2). A weak staffing structure under the library management grades will need to be examined in order to strengthen the potential of the branch network.

9.2 Technology

The technological structure of the Library Service consists of a Local Area Network running between HQ and the Library Branch network. The LMS in operation is Sierra (a national system) which was installed in mid July of this year. There is a dynamic library website www.clarelibrary.ie and approx 87 public access internet PCs located in 16 service points (including Local Studies). Two branches presently have Wi Fi and Surfbox (a self-service printing, photocopying, scanning utility), there is an RFID enabled self-service system in DeValera Library. From a survey conducted for insurance purposes in 2016, the majority of PCs in the Library network are deemed to be very dated and range in age from 2005-2009. In recent years 31 staff PCs have been replaced, with 19 still remaining to be updated. A total of 70 out of the 87 public internet PCs are nearing end of life – the majority of which were installed in 2005. Additional items of software and hardware require updating – firewalls and the exchange server. It is estimated that it will cost in the region of €60,000 to upgrade both out of date hardware and software. In 2017, the Library service will transition to an integration of Library IT with Council IT. It is anticipated that this will bring cost savings and upgrades in the areas of hardware and software.

9.3 Marketing and Communications

In recent years, technology has become an increasing asset in the delivery of library services – allowing the public to manage their accounts through self-service options such as downloading online book resources, using PC reservations, Wi Fi etc. It is thought that the future library will be more and more technologically advanced and with this comes the need to train and upskill staff to improve the user experience and enhance service delivery whilst also providing opportunities for the public to learn about new technological advances. The importance of broadband availability and Wi Fi is to the forefront of public requirements and Government policy. Therefore over the lifetime of the plan most branches will become Wi Fi enabled (Standard 4.7)*. It is envisaged that the new County Library will open as an Open Library in 2019/20 and the digitization programme for unique cultural material will continue (Standard 4.7.3)*. Clare County Library will also adapt a Digital Communications Marketing Strategy over the lifetime of the present plan.

9.4 Collaboration and Partnerships

Clare County Library collaborates with a wide range of groups and agencies locally and nationally – these include: Aontas, NALA, CBI, Arts Council, Heritage Council, Ennis Book Club Festival, Clare Education Centre, Glór, Age Friendly County Initiative, St. Joseph's Hospital, Carrigoran Nursing Home, Poetry Ireland, Clare FM, Eirí Corca Bascinn, Age and Opportunity Ireland, Clare Volunteer Centre, Enterprise Ireland, Clare Archaeological and Historical Society, Shannon Archaeological & Historical Society, North Clare Historical Society, Clare Roots, 2016 Office, Immigrant groups – African and Polish, local Primary and Secondary schools, Miltown Malbay Education Resource Centre, Clare/Limerick Education Training Board, Science Ireland, Cuimhneamh an Chláir, Clare Youth Centre, etc. During the lifetime of this strategy links to national and local agencies will continue to be developed and strengthened.

9.5 Funding Allocation

Total expenditure on the library service in 2016 was €3,970,954. The largest portion of this was on staffing and operational costs. The bookfund in 2010 was €268,089 but had dropped to €187,000 in 2015 reflecting a per capita spend of €1.60. An extra contribution of €100,000 in 2016 brought the per capita spend up to €2.42 (the highest level it has attained in recent years). It will be necessary to increase the bookfund on an annual basis to reach the standard of €3.77. Upgrading of the library network of branches commenced in 2013 with works completed in DeValera Library, Shannon and Ennistymon branches with a budget of €50,000 per branch. It is necessary to continue this and if possible to increase the funding allocation to allow for upgrades to library reception desks and improvement works in children's and adult spaces. Investment in modern technology will be an ongoing challenge in this plan. It is intended that through the integration of Library IT with Council IT that the branch network will be Wi Fi enabled in the early stages of this plan, thus, swiftly attaining the standard that each public library will provide Wi Fi access (Standard 4.7)*.

There is still the more challenging requirement to upgrade at least one branch per year to be RFID enabled, this is an expensive endeavour with the cost of implementation of RFID in DeValera branch, Ennis coming in at €48,891in 2016. The Council will invest €4.6m of its own resources to part finance the new County Library, this is by far the largest capital investment in the Library service in recent years and will realize the long held ambition to provide a modern county Library which will showcase all the best in library innovation and modern service delivery.

Implementation programme

Reading and Learning	Collection Development Policy including book promotions Progress to €3.77 per capita spend Adoption of new LMS and participation in national resource sharing Participate in "Right to Read" campaign Collaborate with child care bodies, schools, business and enterprise sector, Age Friendly County programme
Accessibility and Inclusivity	Investment in buildings and review of spaces Marketing and promotions programme Digitization programme Literacy programmes Support to social inclusion agenda of Clare County Council
Culture and Community	Programme of Outreach activities Local Studies Curation strategy Support to Culture 2025 Support to key Council initiatives e.g. Fleadh, County of Culture, Ennis Book Club Festival, 1916/2016 Legacy Programme.

Monitoring and Review

This development plan (2016-2021) will provide the focus for the PMDS process in the library service over the lifetime of the plan. It will be reviewed on an annual b asis with regard to progress made and areas for prioritization. It will also be subject to review through the relevant SPC and through the monthly Management Report mechanism of the Local Authority.

Appendix 1 - Issues, Registration, Wi Fi, Internet, Visits to branches

Year	Issues Total	Registrations	Wi Fi	Internet usage	Visits to branches
2009	524,271	80,493		17,765	350,250 **
2010	534,144	74,968		17,819	414,400 **
2011	547,464	66,010		17,814	399,775 **
2012	567,129	64,775		19,964	433,350
2013	544,102	56,657	135	18,566	397,600
2014	536,285	50,572	493	18,355	460,850
2015	522,632	50,512	383	17,877	464,450

** full-time branches only, from 2012 all branches are included

Appendix 2 - Directorates, position of Library Service

Clare County Library forms part of the Social Development Directorate. The County Librarian reports to the Director of Social Development which comprises Housing, Cultural and Sports amenities. At time of writing of strategy a review of the SPC structure is underway. Heretofore, the Library and Arts services came under the remit of the Cultural, Arts, Community, Recreation and Amenity Services SPC which met 4 times per year.

The County Librarian has responsibility for the Arts, Libraries, Museum and Archives Services and sits on the board of Glór and the West Clare Community and Education Centre, Ltd.

Appendix 3 - Library Branch Network

Appendix 4 (a) - Bookfund, Total stock

Year	Opening stock	Withdrawals	Additions	Closing stock	Bookfund
2009	326,930	21,751	28,402	333,581	€274,250
2010	333,581	18,875	26,889	341,595	€268,089
2011	341,595	33,311	33,940 **	342,224	€253,760
2012	342,224	22,315	20,973	340,882	€194,727
2013	340,882	21,253	20,954	340,583	€172,515
2014	340,583	26,289	21,432	335,726	€174,440
2015	336,325	18,701	16,832	334,456	€171,000

** includes 8,928 photographs

Appendix 4 (b) - Age of stock countywide

Category	% > 5 years old
Adult fiction	65%
Adult non-fiction	79%
Children's	71%
DVD	38%
Music	78%

Appendix 5 - Visits to Branches

Year	Visits to branches
2009	350,250 **
2010	414,400 **
2011	399,775 **
2012	433,350
2013	397,600
2014	460,850
2015	464,450

** full-time branches only, from 2012 all branches are included

Appendix 6 - Current staffing structure

As at Nov 2016	55 staff	45.4 FTE
Co. Librarian (grade 8)	1	1
Snr Exec Librarian (grade 7)	1	1
Snr Exec Librarian (grade 7 Acting)	1	1
Executive Librarian (grade 6)	4	3.8
Assistant Librarian (grade 5)	2	1.8
Staff Officer Library (grade 5)	9	8.4
Assistant Staff Officer (grade 4)	2	2
Snr library Assistant (grade 4)	6	5.8
Clerical Officer (grade 3)	4	3.4
Library Assistant (grade 3)	5	4.8
Branch Librarian	8	4.1
Van Driver	1	1
Library Attendant	10	6.9
Cleaner	1	0.4

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Submissions

Mark C. Meade, Louisville, Kentucky, USA 17/12/2015
Nora Hegarty, Ennis, 7/1/2016
Query from Larry Brennan, Clare Roots Society, no submission received

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Social Development Directorate

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