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## **A Collaborative approach to rural planning launched - conference and book launch was held at Tipperary Institute**

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### A Collaborative approach to rural planning launched

A much anticipated conference and book launch was held at Tipperary Institute this week. The focus was Integrated Area Planning and over 120 delegates attended from diverse areas including; senior planners, elected officials, academics, policy makers and decision makers within community development organisations. Proceedings were officially opened by the Minister of State at the Department of Health chr(38) Children - Maire Hctor who acknowledged the significance of the conference and the importance of collaboration in rural development processes. One of the keynote speakers was Mr Trevor Cherrett who leads the Planning, Housing chr(38) Transport Unit at the Commission of Rural Communities in the UK. He presented his research into the changing demographics of rural England where older citizens are moving to the country and the younger generations are leaving rural areas (not an unfamiliar scene in Ireland!). The Secretary General at the Department of Community, Rural chr(38) Gaeltacht Affairs - Mr Gerry Kearney spoke of the importance of sustainable food and energy production to the future of the rural economy.

In addition to the keynote speakers a wide range of workshops were held throughout the day on such topics as; social inclusion, governance, environment and participation and capacity building. It was in these workshops where numerous passionate debates and lively discussions took place. The workshops themselves were a vehicle to explore how individuals and communities can have a greater role in decision making processes on issues that affect rural Ireland. Elisha McGrane, Specialist at Tipperary Institute and co facilitator of the Environment workshop highlighted how the Integrated Area Planning framework is being used to empower communities to influence positive and sustainable change in their local areas.

According to Ciaran Lynch, a key theme of the conference was to debate and discuss the idea that “planning for rural areas is a multi-faceted process that ideally should address all aspects of rural community life”. Traditionally planning practise has focused on spatial development. Increasingly, however, it is recognised that a successful plan for an area’s development cannot deal with spatial aspects in isolation from the physical, social and economic environment and should involve rural communities with a broad range of players.

Over the past number of years the Rural Development Dept in Tipperary Institute has worked with many local authorities, communities and state organisations on the issue of planning and on ways of fostering collaboration and methods for addressing a broader range of focuses within that process. This work has allowed Institute staff to develop a framework for local planning that fits in with the Integrated Area Planning or IAP approach. It is this framework along with detailed case studies which forms the content of the book Integrated Area Planning - A Collaborative Approach to Decision Making. The publication was officially launched at Tipperary Institute as part of the conference proceedings by Cllr. Jim Casey and Cllr. John Foley, the chairs of North and South Tipperary County Councils respectively.

“Integrated Area Planning is a book that aims to bring together the lessons my colleagues in the Rural Development Department have learned over the past 7 years in working with communities and partnership organisations,” explains Catherine Corcoran, TI Programme Specialist. The book is based on the premise that decisions about how a particular geographic area should develop, should be made in a way that actively involves the community in question,” she continued.

For further information on Tipperary Institute and Integrated Area Planning activities or to purchase a copy of the book

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