Leitrim County Council is delivering ‘Driving Change’ for the border region

Driving Change is a cross border road safety project aimed at improving the response of the fire services to road traffic collisions (RTC’s) along the border area and reducing the numbers of people killed or seriously injured on border roads. It is targeted at the six Border Counties of the Republic of Ireland (Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth) and Northern Ireland (excluding Belfast). The project is supported by the EU's INTERREG IVA programme managed through the Special European Union Programmes Body and has received funding of approximately £1.25 million.

The project commenced in July 2010 and is due to be completed by July 2013. Five project staff are employed to deliver the project and are based at the project office in Armagh.

Project Manager – Ian McQuitty
Project Officers (Technical) – Martin Yore, Rory Dumigan
Project Officer (Youth Work) – Louise Headley
Project Administrator – Tina McCay

The project partners include:

- Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) in Northern Ireland – (Lead Partner)
- Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (Dublin)
- Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS)
- Border Fire Authorities of Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth
- Public Achievement (PA) – a youth based civic education charity organisation based in Belfast
- Cooperation and Working Together (CAWT) – a cross border health service collaboration between the HSE and the Northern Ireland Health Trusts
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Leitrim County Council is the lead authority in the Republic that is coordinating the implementation of the project among the border fire authorities. Chief Fire Officer Finian Joyce is the representative of the border counties on the Driving Change Project Steering Group.
Project Aims and Objectives

The Driving Change project is focused on delivering its objectives in accordance with the following three key themes:

1. **Improved access to Road Rescue Services**;
   This has been achieved by tackling the differences that currently exist among all of the participating fire services to ensure a consistent service across the border region. The project has specifically delivered training courses on a joint attendance basis to fire fighters from both sides of the border. The first course includes training in Road Traffic Collision (RTC) extrication techniques and procedures for joint attendance by fire services north and south at RTC's. To date the training has been undertaken by over 267 fire fighters from 51 fire stations across both jurisdictions. Twenty eight firefighters from Leitrim fire service have attended this two day training course so far. The second course has also provided First Responder training (accredited to PHECC national standards) for 84 firefighters from both jurisdictions aimed at improving the level of casualty care at RTC’s. Twelve firefighters from Leitrim fire service have undertaken this one week training course. This will bring the total number of first responders in Leitrim fire service up to a total of twenty five.
2. **Education and Information – Sharing of Learning;**

**Road Safety Workshops**
In addition to the training courses for fire personnel, the Driving Change project staff have also facilitated many Road Safety related workshops and Road shows to ensure that the considerable knowledge and experience of the issues relating to both road safety and RTC incident management are being shared across all of the sectors and stakeholders involved. A number of workshops have been held across the border region. Recently a workshop was held in Manorhamilton organized by the Driving Change project team in conjunction with the local fire service in Manorhamilton. It included driver simulation testing for young drivers and also an RTC demonstration carried out by the local fire crew. Local members of other emergency services were also in attendance.
Civic Youth Work promoting Road Safety

As part of the Driving Change project, training in civic youth work specifically related to road safety has also been provided to adults who have volunteered from across the eligible region, many of which are fire fighters. This training is aimed at encouraging them to engage with local young people to address specific road safety issues in their own local areas. So far the project has successfully provided training to 56 adult coaches across the border region from both jurisdictions. These coaches have received training that has been accredited by Queens University in Belfast.

During the project 11 adult coaches have been trained in Leitrim, 8 of which are fire service personnel. They are giving their time on a voluntary basis to work with the young people in developing local road safety projects.

Groups of volunteers including Leitrim fire personnel that have received adult coach training as part of Driving Change project

These coaches together with Driving Change project staff and Public Achievement are working with young people (aged 17 – 24) and their families to deliver a range of projects at local level which addresses the driving habits and attitudes of young people. They are using the Civic Youth Work model below to develop local projects.

March 2013
One such youth group has recently been established in Manorhamilton under the leadership of Brigid McGrath a firefighter in Manorhamilton who has received training as an adult coach during the project. They have commenced work on their project and will report on the outcome later in the year.
3. **Workforce Integration / Mobility;**

This aspect of the project aims to introduce a set of practical initiatives that will enable fire and rescue staff to cooperate and work better together at RTC’s across both jurisdictions. The project facilitated an RTC Incident Management Seminar in November 2011 with attendees from a wide range of stakeholders involved in RTC’s from both jurisdictions across the border region.

In particular the seminar provided an opportunity for fire fighters and officers from across all of the seven participating fire services to come together with their colleagues from the other statutory emergency services in both jurisdictions to discuss the issues relating to RTC’s from a wide range of professional perspectives. The outcomes and recommendations arising out of the seminar are being used to develop or improve inter-service partnerships/agreements and working arrangements to improve the response of fire services to RTC’s in future along the border area. Further progress is expected in this area before the end of the project in July 2013.
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