

Update 2: April 2003 – July 2003

Background

Taobh Tíre – a better library service for rural areas is a pilot research project, run by Donegal County Library. Target areas and potential models were selected based on the findings of the first phase of the project. Initially, three models were identified – ICT (making use of Information and Communications Technology); Inter-agency partnership (working with other organisations and service providers); and Community partnership (working with local community groups). As plans progressed it became obvious that each model did not stand-alone. The project is therefore described by area.

www.donegallibrary.ie and the WebOPAC (online catalogue)

The new library website extends facilities worldwide as well as countywide, around the clock. Library members can select an item online and have it delivered to the nearest networked library. *Taobh Tíre* will enhance this service by extending the number of access and collection points from 9 to 20. These points underpin each model and will be located in community buildings in the target areas. Each will also have a ‘taster’ collection of library stock.

Taobh Tíre in South-West Donegal

Taobh Tíre will work with Aislann Chill Chartha (full-time community centre in Kilcar), Seirbhís Iompair Tuaithe Teoranta (SITT is the local Rural Transport Initiative) and a local fish factory. Killybegs library will be upgraded to provide internet access and extended opening hours, tailored to the SITT timetable. The community bus will take the collection/delivery service a stage further by calling to the door of housebound readers.

Taobh Tíre in Arranmore and Tory Islands

Arranmore (population 543) and Tory (population 133) will be provided with a service, in co-operation with the North Western Health Board (NWHB), Comharchumann Thoraí Teo (local co-operative) and SITT. Alternatives to ISDN and PSTN are being examined in order to provide the most reliable system using the latest developments in technology.

Taobh Tíre in the peninsulas of Fanad and Rosguill

Fanad and Rosguill have a high proportion of older people living in isolated situations. Mevagh Resource Centre, Fanavolty Hall and the Ionad Lae (Day Centre for older people) in Fanad will work with *Taobh Tíre*. The VEC Mobile IT unit and staff will assist with training in the use of the internet. Citizen’s Information Centre staff and library staff will jointly run outreach activities and information sessions in the area.

Taobh Tíre in East Donegal

Teenagers will be the main focus in East Donegal. A programme will be drawn up in conjunction with St Johnston/Carrigans Resource Centre and Donegal Youth Council. Text messaging will be an important means of communication. A group of Lithuanian workers will also participate. In association with the Western Education and Library Board, a funding application has been submitted for a cross-border mobile library. If

successful, a mobile library with internet access would service the culturally-linked areas immediately east and west of the River Finn from Derry City to the twin towns of Lifford and Strabane.

Taobh Tíre in An Gaeltacht Láir

Baile na Finne (Fintown) has been identified by Údarás na Gaeltachta as the location for industrial, social and cultural facilities to serve the Gaeltacht Lár area. Taobh Tíre will work with Coiste Éigse Seán Bhán and Coiste Oibre Baile na Finne to set up a rural library and information point. A collection of antiquarian books of Irish/American interest will also be available. Fás and MFG [Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta] will also be involved. Other projects relating to digitisation and e-consultation for community groups will be incorporated.

Next stage

Equipment will be installed and tested during September. Some models remain to be finalised, such as an access point in a post office/shop. An evaluation framework is being drawn up whereby objectives will be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis. Marketing, promotion and reader development plans will be launched as soon as initial training and troubleshooting has taken place. Existing library staff will provide support to models in their areas.

This update is a very short synopsis. Without exception, there is great enthusiasm for the project, which shows the widespread recognition of the need to increase the social, educational and cultural opportunities of every person in the county.

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