

Putting Communications on the RPA Agenda
Conference

**Communications in Practice
through Change**

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Donegal County Council - Profile

- Population of County Donegal (2002) = 137,000
- Housing stock of 2994 dwellings to be managed
- Length of public road network is 6,295 km
- 30,000 households connected to public water supplies
- 7,000 planning applications received in 2005
- 150,000 motor tax transactions handled annually
- Total budget for 2006 is €440 million (€150m revenue and €290m capital)
- Staff complement of 1225 (whole-time equivalents = 1181)

Origins of the project - Internal

- Staff reports 1986 and 1993 identified a range of problems (lack of leadership, centralised decision-making, lack of clarity on roles and working relationships, etc) leading to poor public perception and low morale.
- Recommendations for action:
 - * Operational - improvements which could be implemented immediately
 - * Critical action - short term remedial actions
 - * Strategic - requiring sustained attention from top management (e.g., decentralisation)

Origins of the Project - External

- Public service modernisation agenda (Strategic Management Initiative, Information Society, etc)
- Better Local Government (1996):
 - * Enhancing local democracy (Strategic Policy Committees, Corporate Policy Group, Electoral Area Committees)
 - * Developing the role of local government (County Development Board)
 - * Providing better quality services (decentralisation of service delivery, One Stop Shops, etc)
 - * Improved efficiency (financial management systems, performance indicators, VFM, etc)
 - * New management / organisational structures to support and underpin these changes

Proposals for change - April 1996

- Creation of a new organisation and management structure to :
 - enable work to be done at the appropriate level
 - manage human and financial resources more effectively
 - devise and implement the systems and procedures needed to deliver work programmes
- Decentralisation of services to the Electoral Areas
- Establishment of Electoral Area Committees to focus on operational issues
- Establishing the local authority as the focal point for the delivery of local services
- Creation of new systems for the management of work programmes

Progress to date - five phases

- Phase 1 - Organisation and management of the project (1996)
- Phase 2 - Data gathering and analysis of data (1996 - 97)
- Phase 3 - Development and discussion of emerging proposals (1998-99)
- Phase 4 - Agreement on the shape of the new structure (2000 - 2001)
- Phase 5 - Implementation (2001 - date)

Phase 1 - Organisation and management of the project (1996)

- CEO (County Manager) owned and visibly lead the project
- Supported by a dedicated Project Team (selected on the basis of skill mix, grade representation, interest and capacity) and by an organisation specialist
- Systematic approach to be taken:
 - * Conceptual and theoretical foundations
 - * Describe the work to be done by the organisation
 - * Begin at the front line

Phase 2 - Data gathering and analysis (1996 - 97)

- Staff interviews (350+)
- Understanding the data emerging from the interviews by reference to an explicit definition of “work”:
 - * roles not clearly defined
 - * working relationships unclear
 - * absence of accountability
 - * gaps in systems and planning
 - * lack of leadership
- Creating a clearer picture of the work to be done:
 - * Task tables
 - * Staff participation in focus groups

Phase 3 - Development and discussion of emerging proposals (1998-99)

- Detailed analysis of the work to be done.
- Initial drafts of some specimen role descriptions
- Staff perceptions of the emerging proposals, in the context of the national landscape
- The link between “reorganisation” and “decentralisation”, i.e. between functional and geographical alignment

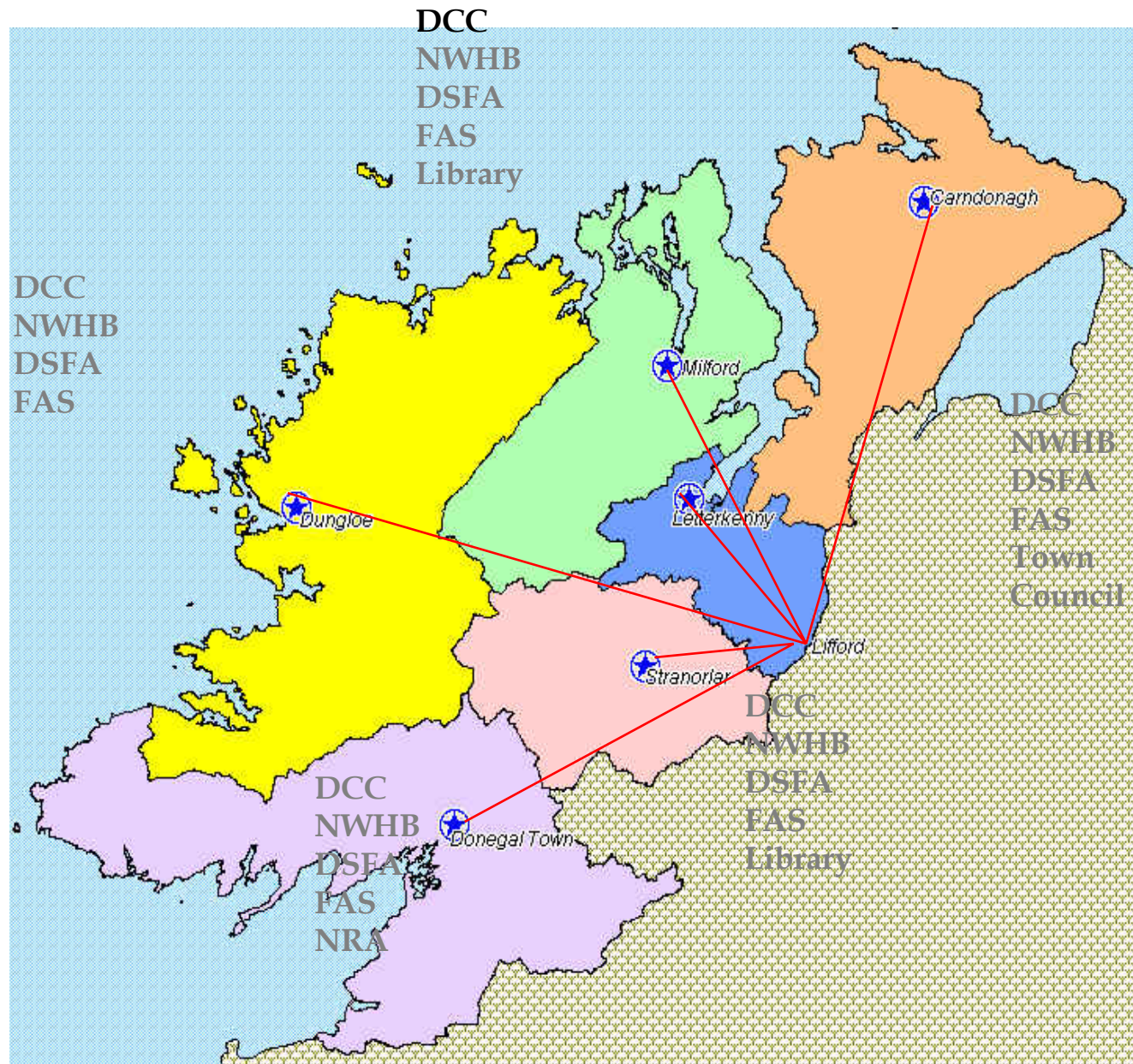
Phase 4 - Agreement on the shape of the new structure (2000 - 2001)

- An explicit and agreed statement of managers' responsibilities at each level was created
- All of the managerial roles needed to match the statement of responsibilities were identified.
- This provided the framework on which the new structure was built
- Implementation of the new structure was negotiated and agreed in the context of a nationally agreed framework for the implementation of BLG.

Phase 5 - Implementation begins (2001 - date)

- Selection for the new posts undertaken in accordance with nationally agreed arrangements
- Staff appointed to new posts
- Beginning the transformation from being “in post” to being “in role”:
 - * Formal delegation of authority
 - * Training and development
 - * Building the systems necessary to support the structure
- Decentralisation : five new offices opened to date, with one more proposed

Decentralisation - Public Service Centres



DCC
 NWHB
 DSFA
 FAS
 Teagasc
 Library

ICT Systems:

- Leased lines
- Corporate Intranet
- Contact Mgt System (eDirect)
- iPlan
- Agresso
- Technipoint (Housing)
- etc

Key features of the new organisation

- From a Dual (*i.e. separate professional and administrative streams*) to a Unified Structure
- From a Grading Structure to a Management Structure (*i.e. a structure of accountable managerial roles with delegated authority appropriate to each level*)
- 7 Directorates (including new Community / Enterprise function under the County Development Board)
- 4 Levels of Management
- Decentralised system of management - functional and geographical alignment
- Linkages to other public services - Integrated Service Centres

Decentralised service delivery and decision making - some examples

- **Housing :** Applications for local authority housing, loans, grants
Maintenance and repairs
- **Roads :** Planning and implementation of annual Roadworks Programme
Local Improvement Schemes
- **Water :** Operation and maintenance of water and wastewater systems
Group Water Schemes
Service Connections
- **Planning :** Planning applications
Unauthorised development
Local Area Plans
- **Corporate :** Motor taxation and driver licensing
Cash receipting

Principal developments in DCC (1996 - 2003)

- A new organisation and management structure implemented under BLG.
- New political structures (Electoral Area Committees, SPCs, CPG, County Development Board, etc.)
- Decentralisation of services to five Electoral Areas completed early 2004.
- Donegal selected as national pilot site for the development and roll-out of integrated public services

Benefits of the new structure

- Clear accountability for getting work done - unified structure
- Enhanced cross-service collaboration
- Greater accessibility to managers and staff for customers and members
- Sharper focus on costs
- Significant improvements in the quality of services

Challenges and constraints

- Keeping all stakeholders on board:
 - Employees
 - Unions
 - Elected Members
 - Public i.e. Customers / Clients
 - External agencies
- Competing interests and expectations
- Desire for change to happen in timely fashion
- Centralisation - of decision making, control of funding systems etc.

Carndonagh Public Service Centre



Milford Public Service Centre



Letterkenny Public Service Centre



Dungloe Public Service Centre



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