

## **Press release**

### ***Comhairle na nOg County Louth***

Comhairle na nOg, as it is called, or voice of the youth in the local democratic system will hold its first meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> Oct. Formerly known as Louth Junior Council, past representatives were elected from participating post primary schools in the County. The schools, drawing candidates from Transition Year students, can choose either to open the election process to the whole school, the senior cycle students or the TY students. In this way it informs students on how to vote, how to canvass and how the proportional representation system works which, will hopefully generate an interest in participation in future local and a national elections. Cllr Oliver Tully, chair person of the VEC and a teacher in St Joseph's CBS Drogheda remembers the objective Louth County Council had in mind when the Junior Council was adopted by the Council back in 2001 as being that of promoting interest among youth in the electoral system.

This year 12 schools took part in the election process, Drogheda Grammar, St Mary's Diocesan, Our Lady's, Greenhills, St Joepsh's CBS in Drogheda, Scoil Ui Mhuiri, Dunleer, St Louis Secondary School, St Vincent's Secondary School, De La Salle, St Mary's, Dundalk Grammar, O'Fiach College in Dundalk and Bush, Cooley. Elections were held in the schools based on a replica model of the formal election process. Teachers demonstrated the proportional representation system to the students in preparation for the elections and students presided over the election in each school. The subsequent counts took place in two centres, South Louth, in the Dunleer Recreation Centre, and North Louth in Stephenstown Pond Centre. Candidates from the participating schools, their agents, support team and teachers were present at both counts. Students also participated in the count teams. A number of Louth County Councillors also attended both count centres and the whole process replicated the actual count processes of adult elections. Padge McKenna, former town clerk of Monaghan Town Council officiated at both accounts assisted by Eugene McManus, Administrative Officer, LCC.

Comhairle na nOg 2008 will have a different format to previous years in that the Comhairle will also have representatives from youth outside the school system such as Youth Reach, the Garda Diversion Programme, Drogheda Young Persons Network, People with Disabilities, Girl Guides, Scouts, Youth Work Ireland, Foroige and Travellers. Ian Walker, Youth Officer, Louth VEC and Mary Deery Administrative Officer, Louth County Council will facilitate the Comhairle na nOg process assisted by an Expert Advisory Group set up representing all sectors involved in Comhairle. It is hoped that such a process will enable a more inclusive participation in the democratic system and local administration.