

Every month throughout the year a formal meeting was held in the Training Unit which recorded a very high percentage of attendance by members. It was with regret that the Committee noted the resignations of Ms. Tras Honan, who had contributed most positively during her 13 years as a committee member and Mr. Paul McAuliffe, who had been a member for only a short period. The current number of members on the Committee now number six in total.

The Training Unit in 2006 provided multiple avenues for offenders to self-improve holistically. For most of the year, a quarter of the population of the Training Unit were granted daily reviewable temporary release to employment, to attend courses in Fas Centres, Dublin City University, PACE, Pathways, Mountjoy work party, Treble R. Industries etc. Such enabled some offenders to commence work for the first time, others to continue and expand on previous employment experiences. It also provided financial support for themselves and their families. Temporary release was also approved to offenders to do their driver theory tests for both car and heavy-duty vehicles plus driving tuition for both. In addition, beginners (4 day) and advanced (10 day) Fork-lift courses were successfully completed by offenders from the Training Unit. A most important aspect of the Connect regime here was the high number who passed the Safe-Pass course which is mandatory for everyone both entering and working on building sites. Currently there are some offenders taking part in interviews with Fáilte Ireland with the intention of doing catering courses.

Internally, the Industrial workshops continued to provide well-structured (London City & Guilds approved) training in many types of welding, electronic assembly and computer studies. Earlier this year, one of the recreation rooms was re-designed as a computer workshop, similar to a computer training room in any Company for use by offenders every evening and at weekends and opens as soon as the Educational Unit and Industrial workshops close. It allows all those who are currently learning various computer courses to continue to do so at their own time and also gives to other offenders the possibility to discover and experiment on the computer system available to them assisted by their colleagues.

The Education Centre continued to provide a wide range of opportunities for offenders to obtain certification in many subjects particularly with Fetac and Microsoft users. An Arts week was held in June and exhibited the best of the visual arts produced by the art students here. We would like to extend our congratulations to Mr. Stephen O'Connor, Head Teacher here for many years, was promoted to the post of Co-Ordinator of Education in Prisons within the Dublin V. E. C. area. He was a very progressive, enlightened teacher who pioneered new initiatives with his area of responsibility here.

The facilities available to offenders within the Training Unit remained good. Last year, a psychologist was appointed here on a 4 day-a-week basis. This has proved to be most helpful to offenders, and at one of our monthly meetings at our request the Psychologist met the Committee and outlined the parameters of the work that she does with offenders. We were very impressed by her professionalism and her replies to our questions.

At two other monthly meetings, we met both the Assistant Governor, Work & Training and the Head Teacher, who gave us in-dept knowledge of what was available to offenders in their work areas. We

found this process invaluable as new members had come on the Committee and this was an ideal method of bringing them up-to-date.

Members visited the Training Unit at unannounced times between visits. All was found to be correct but it was noticed that there were areas of the Institution in need of decoration, with walls and doors marked and scuffed. We are aware that as a result of the Proposal for Organisational Change in the Irish Prison Service, two of the four Trades staff (a painter and electrician) were no longer to be deployed as tradesmen locally, and the other two to be deployed as part of a regional trades team to carry out essential maintenance work. As a result, painting contractors were awarded the tender for painting all the walls and doors of the Institution. This has given the Institution a brighter and cleaner atmosphere.

The kitchen work area was completely revamped, with work there lasting for six weeks and most existing equipment being replaced . The area is a credit to all who work there.

During the year it was announced that the entire Mountjoy Complex was to be re-located in Thornton Hall in 2010. The Committee felt that it was crucial that it be allowed to make a contribution to the special committee set up to deal with all aspects and services required on the new prison site by the Irish Prisons Service. We would maintain that we could positively advise on many aspects of the proposed Institution and in particular on the new ' Training Unit ', its size, what would happen there for offenders and most importantly if possible to retain the same working ethos that has currently exists here over the years between staff and offenders.

As part of our learning experience, we visited PACE in Priorswood on 2 November 2006. This was a very rewarding learning curve as there was a wealth of work / training going on there, e.g. art and glass work, welding. It was enlightening to see people proud of what they were doing and capable of making a living from it.

In 2006 177 offenders were transferred here from various Prisons. The offender population was at capacity level for most of the year. As of yet the only drug free Institution within the system, it remains such that many offenders wish to be transferred here , for medical , workshop and rehabilitation purposes. With its relaxed regime, greater emphasis on personal responsibility to self-improve , the Training Unit population responds very positively to what is on offer and makes very good use of all the services available.

An example of the good work and self achievement was the running of a 50 miles non-stop ultra marathon from Ballybunion, Co. Kerry to Limerick by offender Patrick Scanlon on 17 December 2005. He had done all his training inside the perimeter wall here and it was only with a few days left before the 17 th. that he was granted temporary release to run in the South, otherwise the run would have taken place here. He was assisted by many other offenders during his training by doing laps of the wall and donating some of their own personal money He raised in excess of thirty five thousand euro divided among four charities, The Chernobyl Childrens' Project , The Romanian Children Orphanage, The Street Children of Calcutta and The Children Orphanage of Medjugorge . It was disappointing to note that Patrick did not express any thanks to the Irish Prison Service for allowing him to do the run and in particular to all those in the Training Unit who were instrumental in making this event happen.

No complaints were made by offenders to the Committee in 2006.

In conclusion, The Committee wishes to thank all those who assisted in any way in the functioning of the Training Unit in 2006.

_____ Ms. Geraldine Foster.

_____ Ms. Kathleen Diamond.

_____ Ms. Deirdre Keneally.

_____ Mr. Noel Coade.

_____ Mr. Donal Doran.

_____ Mr. Christopher Faulkner.