

CHAPTER 8 – PEOPLE POWER

The effort put in at ground level was, indeed, often staggering. So how did these local pioneers, who did so much to lay the foundations for **Ireland for Europe's** campaign success, set about winning hearts and minds in their areas?

For *Wicklow for Europe* the call to action came out of the blue and with no time to spare.

WICKLOW FOR EUROPE

By Jason Cooke, Wicklow for Europe Communications Director

Lisbon 2 the Wicklow Way, a road less travelled, a unique approach, a proud result!

"Hello, my name is Tim Bourke, we don't know each other, but I was given your name and told that I should contact you". Bourke was **Ireland for Europe's** regional campaign co-ordinator and the man he was calling in Wicklow was Dermot Dwyer.

Dermot Dwyer had no involvement in politics, but he did have a vast number of contacts. In a wide-ranging career, this Harvard-graduate had been President of the Irish Hotels Federation in the '80s and now held directorships in Setanta Sports Ireland, Ireland's long-awaited convention centre at Dublin's Spencer Dock and the über-smart Ritz-Carlton Powerscourt resort in Enniskerry. Most importantly for Tim Bourke, Dwyer lived in Greystones.

"We simply can't leave Lisbon 2 to the politicians," Bourke told Dwyer bluntly. "I know you're a busy man, but perhaps you would consider helping us over the next few weeks to put a campaign together in Wicklow. Why don't you come in and meet Brendan and Pat for a chat, no commitments of course... just to hear what they have to say."

The **Ireland for Europe** ground-up strategy, Bourke explained to Dwyer, was to have around 20 locally-based and organised campaigns operating as a network of regional media hubs dotted across the country. And with Wicklow boasting three newspaper groups and its own radio station, it was a significant media hub.

The problem was, Wicklow had no activists, no campaign, no canvass team and no plan. With less than eight weeks left to polling, Wicklow's prospects for a Yes campaign were firmly stuck in the traps. Dwyer had no experience of electoral campaigning, but he believed in the cause and agreed to do what he could to pull a team together to deliver the Yes campaign in Wicklow.

"Once agreed, an immediate sense of panic set in," Dwyer remembers. "What had I promised? Who would I turn to? And what skills were needed to deliver an effective campaign?" Dwyer, like so many other campaign co-ordinators dotted around the country, sat himself down in his Greystones home and began transcribing a list of trusted friends and colleagues whom he could target for help. He conducted a 'reality check' with his neighbour and Mayor of Greystones George Jones, who encouraged him not to be dissuaded by the scale of the challenge. And so with his own 'yes' to Bourke still echoing in his ears, Dwyer set to the task of scrolling through his phone, and thus began Dwyer's 'I-know-you're-busy-but-would-you-mind' telephone calls to his mosaic of targets.

Dwyer assembled a steering group of seven people. They met in the Ritz-Carlton's bridge-room for the first of many, and soon to be more populated, campaign meetings. The core group of believers comprised both Dwyer and professional communications director Jason Cooke, along with Greystones resident business advisor John Cahill, retired developer and founder of Ireland's largest active retirement group Emmet McGarry, businesswoman and heavily pregnant mum-of-one Jody Wheatley, marketing and design consultancy director Kieran Leonard, and European Movement member Mary Clissmann.

"There was a palpable enthusiasm for the endeavour," remarks Dwyer. "Everyone asked agreed to rise to the challenge and nobody, at any point, even uttered the word 'maybe'. There was a sense at the outset from everyone around the table that political innocence could move mountains, and that if we focused our energies on what we as believers, ordinary voters and citizens 'can do, must do, and will do' then we could deliver the turnaround in Wicklow – in spite of the politicians."

Everyone reflected on what another No vote could do to their county. After all, Europe had been good for Wicklow. European contributions that had poured into Wicklow had funded major infrastructural networks in the county, including the building of the N11 Arklow by-pass, the Rathnew by-pass, and the N11 from Kilmacanogue to the Glen of the Downs; the construction of the DART extension to Greystones; upgrades to coastal protection in Bray, and upgrades to Wicklow and Arklow harbours; funding to develop the county's rich forestry potential in addition to village and urban renewal schemes across the county; and crucially direct support to Wicklow County Enterprise Board to help start-up and emerging businesses all over the county. In addition, the Union had provided financial lifeblood to social initiatives that touched thousands of families in Wicklow, from support for childcare services and access to youth programs to the provision of adult education and employment initiatives.

Fundamentally, the group believed the campaign could not and must not be associated with the political establishment, political parties or political personalities – a challenge that few in the core team underestimated given the presence in the constituency of Ireland's Europe Minister Dick Roche TD and of Fine Gael's referendum director of elections Billy Timmins TD.

The key challenge on that first campaign meeting was to consider how the show could be up and running in a matter of days.

"It was also clear that everyone at the table had a sense of what value and contribution they could deliver to the working unit", recalls John Cahill. "There were no prima donnas; everyone simply rallied around the shared vision of what success would mean for us and what failure would mean for us all, and what we had to do to deliver success in Wicklow."

Mary Clissmann, owner with her husband Dieter of Wicklow's iconic horse-drawn holiday caravan business, was motivated by a declared personal love of Europe and Ireland's place within the European ideal. "My love affair with Europe began in 1960 at the tender age of 16 when I went to study in the Sorbonne in Paris, followed by a long sojourn in Germany, so Europe was always a second home to me."

"I found it incomprehensible when we said no to Lisbon on the first referendum. As an executive delegate on the board of the European Tourist Guide Association, I was in Europe at least twice a year for meetings with 20 other European countries. Obviously, the Lisbon Treaty was discussed and I found that our colleagues, such as the Turkish who are desperate to become members of the European Union, were particularly astounded at our attitude."

Another to immerse herself in the task when common sense should have told her otherwise was businesswoman and pregnant mum of one, Jody Wheatley from Bray. "At 36 weeks pregnant I had settled into eating, watching daytime TV and waiting!! When I got the call asking me to get involved, my head told me to say 'no' but then considering my son had been two weeks late, I hedged my bets

and agreed. At that first meeting Dermot asked 'right, well the referendum is on October 2nd... when are you due?' When I responded October 4th I think the immediacy of the task at hand was clearly registered, certainly for me and I think for the others

Whatever about the immediacy of the task, the challenge of raising campaign finances in the teeth of the worst recession in living memory was also exercising the team. The first pass at a working budget was touching €20,000 – with no war chest to speak of, the canvas for €50 notes to €1,000 donations from like-minded believers and concerned corporate became as prized as the votes themselves. 'We eat what we kill' would become Wicklow's financial battle-cry with everyone on the team prospecting for the rich and very necessary prize of financial support.

Wicklow for Europe were briefed by **Ireland for Europe** leaders Pat Cox and Brendan Halligan but it was always going to do its own thing, in the Wicklow Way. We would draw up our own action plan for gathering donations, devising campaign strategies, strong-arming ambassadors, recruiting evangelists and foot-soldiers, and maintaining eyes on the prize. As the draft campaign script unfurled, marketing and design guru Kieran Leonard proposed a working title to encapsulate the group's message. Wicklow's out-of-its-own-top-drawer campaign slogan "I am Wicklow, I am YES" was born.

A few days on 24th August, I presented a communications plan to the reconvened group. At its core was a countywide volunteer canvass plan built around a roadshow, criss-crossing Wicklow to maximise exposure of the Yes message to voters. Traditional door-to-door canvassing was dismissed from the outset – the group acknowledged from day one that this was simply not going to happen. The *Wicklow for Europe* road-show would be high profile, high energy and high visibility. The road-show and canvass would be supported by a disciplined media strategy built on weekly press releases and photo-calls focused on the county's key media. A sustained media spend would be focused on the county's largest newspaper Wicklow Times targeting 45,000 homes and businesses over a three week period. Local champions would be identified; high profile names and celebrities not only willing to give their own thumbs-up to the campaign and proclaim "I am Wicklow, I am YES", but who'd also roll up their sleeves and press the flesh with the voters.

Kieran Leonard's vision was that the campaign would be highly visible and writ large on a broad canvas. The colour palette would be European blue and yellow to echo the blue and yellow of the Garden County's colours. There'd be posters and leaflets, T-shirts and roadside eight foot by four foot boards – the norm for seasoned political hacks, virgin territory for most around the table.

Leonard's largest set-piece would be the most visible – a 'Eurowagon' that would bring the *Wicklow for Europe* road-show to life and become a mobile messaging board. The unit had been generously donated by Keith Manning of Peggy Murphy's Pub in Enniskerry and would become a talisman for the *Wicklow for Europe* team, a beacon that volunteers could rally around. As for marshalling the unit across the county, the remarkable Mary Clissmann offered herself, and unbeknownst to them and much to her husband Dieter's horror, her family (and her family's Landrover) to lead the unit into electoral battle for the duration of the campaign. The following weeks would see the Clissmann family becoming the most passionate and dedicated canvassers for Lisbon 2.

Giving the 'Eurowagon' the *Wicklow for Europe* razzmatazz, mind, was another matter – the team had less than 48 hours to tailor the graphics for the unit, produce and print them, and then fit each panel. It got a flat tyre, in one of the worst September storms, while en route to a barn on the Powerscourt Estate where it would stay until it had been completely re-skinned with *Wicklow for Europe* graphics. And there was never a ladder when you needed it – the diminutive 5 foot 4 inch Kieran Leonard would be found swinging off the side of the wagon while balancing atop a pair of cavity blocks in a comic attempt to measure the two tonne mobile office.



A core platform of Halligan and Cox's **Ireland for Europe** campaign blueprint was the identification of Irish profile local champions in each region who would add their name to their relevant local campaign. In Wicklow, possible champions were brainstormed among the volunteers. What about champion boxer Katie Taylor or GAA legend Kevin O'Brien? Does anyone know rugby star Leo Cullen or actor Daniel Day Lewis? Do you think champion kick-boxer Julie McHale or golfer Eamonn d'Arcy would agree?

The list was extensive. Wicklow boasts its fair share of national and international stars and celebrities, but without question the ultimate prize would be Mick O'Dwyer, the legendary former Kerry footballer and manager and now Wicklow's most favoured adopted son, having led Wicklow's senior GAA team to undreamt of successes. His support, ultimately delivered, proved crucial to the campaign. "Europe has been good for Ireland, and it's been the best team we've ever been on," the GAA giant announced. "As a manager, I believe strongly that we need to keep our place on Europe's team and that's why I'm urging everyone in Wicklow to vote YES to Lisbon on October 2nd."



The Wicklow football manager and Kerry maestro took to the Baltinglass streets along with legendary Baltinglass clubman and former Wicklow captain Kevin O'Brien, another major coup for the campaign. As well as donning the T-shirts and meeting voters, the footballing pair agreed to issue a joint press announcement and appear in campaign advertising calling on Wicklow voters to join them in saying "I am Wicklow, I am YES"!

As August turned to September, the campaign team of seven had expanded to include 30 volunteers. With Jody Wheatley working down to her due delivery date, she teamed up with John Cahill to develop the all-important canvass plan, knitting canvass locations for the 'Eurowagon' to times and dates and matching each with the 30-plus list of volunteers and canvassers. The canvass plan would take the 'Eurowagon' and the team from Blessington and Baltinglass in the west of the county to Arklow and Aghrim in the south, from Carnew and Ashford to Bray and Wicklow, and all points in between.

Early mornings would find the team outside train stations; afternoons outside schools. Matches would be targeted as would marts, concerts would be canvassed along with charity jamborees, and shoe-horned in between would be photoshoots and press-calls. Each volunteer was under no illusion that once out of the blocks, the campaign momentum would have to be unrelenting if it was to set the pace and the tone of the Lisbon 2 referendum campaign in Wicklow.

Wagon assembled, troops marshalled, posters up, leaflets at the ready and T-shirts on, the *Wicklow for Europe* caravan got set to hit the road – and the self-nominated Mary Clissmann, known throughout the county for the horse-drawn holiday caravans that bore her family name, led out a

caravan of a different colour up into the county's hills and onto the Wicklow highways for the start of Wicklow for Europe's long road to Lisbon II.

At 7am on a bright September morning on Bray Seafront, the 'Eurowagon' made its first public appearance. The audience was small. Today was all about the press, and securing the launch photocall for the campaign. European champion kickboxer Julie McHale from Bray had agreed to kick-start the campaign and was to be Wicklow for Europe's first local champion. She enthusiastically pulled on her "I am Wicklow, I am YES" T-shirt, and gave the thumbs up to Europe along with Brigid Laffan and Wicklow team members Dermot Dwyer, Mary Clissmann, Emmet McGarry and myself.

Photo loaded, Mary handed the keys of the caravan to her daughter Neassa's boyfriend Alan Byrne who'd agreed to drive the mobile unit for the duration of the canvass. "Having just spent two months touring Europe from Rathdrum to Bulgaria in a jeep and tent, I had a new found interest in Europe. When Mary asked me to drive the mobile unit around County Wicklow for the Yes campaign I happily agreed, even when Mary explained that she would need me to canvass as well as to drive – it was a question of all hands on deck."

First on the canvass target list was Tinahely, at the very far end of the county, for an evening canvass that would culminate with a swoop on the concertgoers attending an Eleanor McEvoy gig at the Tinahely Courthouse Arts Centre. Heeding John Cahill's advice, Mary, Alan and co-driver Joey Byrne started off with food – fish and chips as it happened, with a spot of canvassing thrown in, at the local Pineto (owners Eddie and Conor from Ashford turned out to be strong Yes supporters and took a batch of canvass leaflets to hand out along with every bag of chips).

The 'Eurowagon' was set-up on the square in the centre of the village, directly opposite the Arts Centre. Mary Clissmann had made arrangements to meet an old friend, Paddy O'Toole. The O'Toole family had owned and run Black Tom's Pub in Tinahely for generations, while Paddy himself ran the nearby country home Ballybeg House and was also involved with Quinn's of Baltinglass, the renowned supermarket and grains and agricultural merchants in the west Wicklow heritage town. Like Mary and her husband Dieter, Paddy was a lynchpin of tourism in Wicklow and had been Chairperson of Wicklow County Tourism for many years. His contacts across the county, and in particular throughout south and west Wicklow, were immense.

Together, Mary and Paddy plotted out names to contact and canvass, while Paddy delivered a crash-course in locking down votes – there was no point sitting in splendid isolation in the blue and yellow 'Eurowagon', impressive enough as it was, waiting for voters to come to us like bees to the pot; we had to "get off your arses and start marching for Lisbon". Electoral pep-talk bluntly delivered, Paddy took delivery of a box of *Wicklow for Europe* canvass leaflets to distribute throughout Ballybeg House, Black Tom's and Quinns.

Joined by Joe Hayden, whose family had farmed 120 hectares at their award-winning farm outside Tinahely for almost 150 years, Mary and Paddy set off on the first official canvass of *Wicklow for Europe*. The trio began their door-to-door visit of almost every shop, family and pub in Tinahely village to deliver the 'spiel'. At The Honey Inn Restaurant, Paddy enthusiastically charmed two beautiful young waitresses, who – once he was finished – very sympathetically explained that they were from Bratislava and therefore couldn't vote. Outside, the pair effectively canvassed a very pleasant couple – only once again to have their bubble burst by the realisation that husband and wife were from the Czech Republic. Despite early setbacks the canvassers began to hit their stride and began notching up Irish voters. With Paddy, Joe and Mary 'working' the Tinahely locals, Alan and Joey began canvassing concertgoers as they arrived.

As darkness fell the canvass team headed for home, set for the main farmer's mart in Carnew the next morning. However, the experience of the first canvass would contextualise the scale of the job the canvassers needed to do in order to convince the voter that the referendum was too important a vote to risk on sending a protest to the government. "The voter distrust of the government was huge. It meant we had to work really hard trying to get the voter to separate their anger towards the government from the need to support the EU and the Lisbon Treaty."

The following morning's canvass saw the ranked masses of the Clissmann family, including Mary's daughter Carla and her three-year-old son Fintan, along with selected other volunteers descend upon the Saturday morning mart at Carnew. Carla, a commercial director with Glanbia Nutritionals, was fortuitously home from Brussels for a series of work meetings. Her presence was a significant asset on the canvass of over 250 farmers, as she outlined the current mood in Brussels and explained the drastic consequences to our agricultural bargaining power in Europe if we said no to Lisbon.

Notwithstanding the presence of an informed Euro-insider, it was by no means an easy canvass. There were many sad, bitter and worried faces among individual farmers at the mart, and while most present were perfectly polite to *Wicklow for Europe's* female canvassers, they retain some of the blunter points for the male team members – and there was no doubting that there was a significant 'No' lobby at this early stage within the farming community. Directly engaging with voters was a key to winning hearts and minds. "I found it necessary to talk to people almost on a one-to-one basis, said Carla. "Confrontation creates only conflict, so talking and not canvassing worked and, if anything, listening worked best. One comment stands out in my mind more than any else – a local farmer remarked that there had been a time when politicians would come and talk and listen to you, for example outside the church after mass; but now, they weren't even bothered to talk or listen to them any more. I think that very fact that we were willing to talk and listen earned our campaign a level of respect and courtesy from voters such as those farmers, many of whom were barely surviving on the fringes of our society."

Post mart, there was a blitz of Carnew village, before the canvass team moved on to the pub and shops of Aughrim, Ireland's tidiest village, to complete the day's canvass. Once again, the team found themselves making the clear distinction to voters that *Wicklow for Europe* was no political organisation and that the group's only interest was that of our children's future and the future of our country. It was a message that was acknowledged and understood.

John Cahill, who manned his first canvass with the 'Eurowagon' outside Greystones DART station, agrees the campaign's willingness to listen and appreciate the views of others was one of its key pluses. "We had some very interesting visitors to the wagon varying from Europe supporters to those angry with the world to those with local political issues, and from those who wanted intellectual debates to those who blamed all our ills on European immigrants. The trick was to listen and respect all views and just state once again that we were non-political but that we felt Ireland was better off in Europe. Our ability to listen and talk stood us out."

As well as the farming sector, the business community was another important voting block to target. During Lisbon I, the combined Chamber movement in Wicklow had eschewed publicly endorsing a Yes vote. I spoke with John Nolan, President of Bray Chamber and then incumbent President of County Wicklow Chamber, which represented the business community in Bray, Wicklow, Greystones and Arklow, and a commitment was secured for the Chamber movement to publicly come out and endorse the campaign. Yet another photo opportunity for the Wicklow for Europe message was in the bag – more importantly the campaign now had direct canvassing access to the combined chambers' membership database of almost 1,000 business owners and principals.

In North Wicklow, canvasses in the early phase focused on Dublin-bound commuters outside DART stations in Bray and Greystones. The range of reactions from commuters was most striking. There was direct acknowledgement that a Yes vote was actually being fought for this time, that voters were

not being taken for granted, and that each voter was being asked directly for support. Additionally, voters wanted assurances that *Wicklow for Europe's* campaign was not being undertaken or funded by the established political parties. "There was appreciation that the campaign was locally-based, but there was also anger from some that a second vote was being sought on Lisbon," says volunteer Peter Nolan. "People were clearly interested in receiving the campaign literature and becoming informed about the issues involved. Commuters often stopped to take the leaflets as they rushed for the train, and we noticed that there was particular interest evident among women. In other cases, those who were confirmed in voting No were also evident – tight lips, angry looks and ignoring the proffered leaflet."

New campaign recruits Colm Fagan, Denis Dwyer (son of Dermod) and Jurate Ivoskiene from Lithuania practiced their opening lines, invites and statements for approaching voters – "Good evening, vote yes to Lisbon"; "Can I offer you some information about the referendum please?"; "Vote Lisbon to create new jobs"; "No, we're not a political party"; "But sure, it's always good to see what the other side says so you can disagree better"; "I'm sorry, but I'm afraid there's no more t-shirts left"; and so on. Jurate, who was introduced to the Wicklow campaign by local barrister and Euro-campaigner Niall Nelligan, (founder of the Liberals for Europe group) experienced first hand the dynamism of the *Wicklow for Europe* team, their camaraderie and good humour. "My contribution to the second Lisbon referendum was small, but in terms of experience, it was a truly rewarding one. I arrived in Ireland almost nine years ago and in that time, I had witnessed enormous changes not just in terms of the economy but also in Irish society too."

"Europe had given so much to Ireland, allowing a small country on the periphery of Europe (much like my own) to cast aside the shackles of the past and enjoy the fruits of economic and social prosperity. I was both astonished and somewhat saddened then by the result of the first Lisbon referendum, and found it hard to fathom why the Irish electorate was turning its back on the European project at a time when Ireland's participation was essential to overcome difficulties associated with the credit crisis and ensuing recession. I shall never forget that day I spent in Greystones with the 'Eurowagon' distributing leaflets with the great Wicklow team and providing information to the ordinary citizens of that town. I really feel our collective drive and the great personality of the Wicklow campaign made a huge contribution to assisting in the passage of this important referendum."

As the campaign continued, so too did the planning. Morning breakfast meetings with all volunteers melded with daily dial-ins by Dwyer to conference calls led by Brendan Halligan in **Ireland for Europe** headquarters with other regional co-ordinators. On the canvass trail, volunteers were taking every opportunity available to press the flesh and collect committed Yes voters.

In Greystones, Emmet McGarry continued his personal canvass of the seaside town, pounding his shoe leather and hand-delivering over a thousand leaflets a day into homes around the town. In Bray, Kieran Leonard led the early morning canvass of young mums outside local primary schools ("I'm convinced this is how we turned the female vote," enthuses Leonard.) In Rathdrum, Alan Byrne and his friends found themselves in the middle of all kinds of discussions and arguments on Lisbon every time they went out for a quiet drink in the village ("we'd never canvassed before and we ended having to do a crash course on the Lisbon Treaty, but it did mean that a sizable number of young people voted Yes in the Rathdrum area").

In Wicklow Town, the weekly Rotary Club luncheon was canvassed, with local businessman Brendan Newsome not only arranging for parking for the 'Eurowagon' directly in front of the Grand Hotel but also making sure that every Rotary members left home with the *Wicklow for Europe* canvass leaflet. Later that evening Dermod and other team members would arrive to canvass those voters attending a Fine Gael-hosted Lisbon meeting.

Securing parking rights for the 'Eurowagon' was always an endeavour – both physically and logistically. Impressive it may have been but it was also a bit of beast, its two tonne weight requiring

everyone to be in the full of their health to get it into position. And once in place, there would little appetite to move it unless absolutely necessary, so any and all protests of 'you can't park that there' were preferably negotiated out rather than acceded to.

One of the most important canvass days for the campaign almost didn't happen because of parking permits (or lack thereof!) The canvass team had brought the wagon to Aughrim for the County Semi-finals in the Senior Football Championship. With battles between Rathnew and Baltinglass and between St Patrick's Wicklow Town and Kiltegan for a place in the final, this would be the most important date in the campaign calendar with thousands of supporters from across the county descending on the south Wicklow village. This event had to be canvassed.

John Cahill arrived early with seasoned political canvassers Stephen Kearon and Martin Sorahan and set the Eurowagon up in prime vantage outside Aughrim GAA grounds. However the position incurred the wrath of a member of the local Gardaí, who was eager that the unit be moved. In the stand-off, the trio explained to the unsympathetic Garda that the unit had just sat down, and that its support legs



had (allegedly) seized – “we just can't move it”. Kearon bought valuable time continuing his debate with the local constabulary while Sorahan and Cahill quietly persuaded the driver of a newly arrived tow truck (which had been despatched to physically seize the 'Eurowagon') that to move the unit would spell catastrophe for their endeavours. Somehow their pleadings worked, and eyebrows were raised with the sceptical Garda when the tow-truck driver suddenly declared “I can't be moving that now... if I can't raise the legs I can't hook it to my truck”. With that, the tow-truck was off. Enough of the Garda's time had been wasted with this trio of foolish Lisbon canvassers, and the gathering of thousands of football fans were beginning to arrive, demanding

his attention. Not happy but resigned, he moved on – and the 'Eurowagon' stayed put... until the trio were surprising able to raise the support legs at the end of a very successful day's canvass of course!

A permit for parking was however officially secured for the Bridgewater Shopping Centre in Arklow. The two-day all-day canvass of the county's largest and newest retail destination had been negotiated by Dermot Dwyer with Arklow resident Michael Allen who developed of the centre. Dwyer together with a full team of Mary Clissman et al and John Cahill plus his t-shirted Russian-born nephews and Stephen Kearon manned this canvass. “Arklow was tough,” recalls Dwyer. “There was a very real sense amongst the voters we met there that they were in a really bad way. The general mood was despondent. It was very clear that the recession was taking toll on families in the area. All we could do was simply communicate the fact that we believed it would just get worse for them and their families and for all of us if we voted no to Europe.”

The *Wicklow for Europe* campaign was all about effort, and while some put their backs into the campaign others gave an arm and a leg – literally! Stephen Kearon, a mid-campaign recruit who



joined to personally assist the canvas in Arklow, Greystones, Rathdrum, Aughrim and Ballinaclash was one such. “I was en route to Glendalough to help Mary Clissman canvas, when I stopped to put up some posters in my home village of Ballinaclash. As I reached up, I slipped, and went head first into the ditch, breaking my wrist in three places.” After two days in hospital and

an operation to set his wrist, the trouper Stephen was back on the campaign trail for Wicklow for Europe, albeit this time sporting a specially-prepared cast in EU Blue!

Stephen Kearon used his one available good hand to co-ordinate texts and email comments to local radio. He co-ordinated a group of around 50 people, including many *Wicklow for Europe* members, who would receive text and email updates at all hours of the day (and night!) to alert them to relevant discussions on local or national radio, and fed each with template comments that they could text and email into the stations. Soon, *Wicklow for Europe's* placed comments began to capture the largest share of the listener comments on East Coast fm.

Maintaining the momentum of that pro-Europe mood was critical to the group. While the nationwide polls were indicating a clear Yes win, anecdotal reports from the county gave serious cause for concern. Many voters known by campaign members to have been previously pro any Euro referendum put to them were now extremely disaffected with the government, and were set to take out their anger on the political establishment by voting No. In selected towns and villages across the county, marginal communities had become the neglected frontline victims of the demise of the Celtic Tiger and the emergence of the recession. From the checkout tills of Arklow's Bridgewater Centre to the all-male dole queues in Blessington, the pulse of the anger was palpable. The risk was high that these abandoned Wicklow voters would ignore all the pro-Lisbon arguments put to them and vent their justifiable anger at the neglect at the first available opportunity – Lisbon II.

"I remember we had a team meeting shortly before polling and I can clearly remember the sense of determination mixed with anxiety as we went around the table," Newtownmountkennedy volunteer Jane Dignam says. "The national polls were so mixed that there was no clear indication as to how the vote would go. We made a plan for the last few days and vowed to keep trying to sway voters until the close of voting."

The last push included a whistle-stop round of the county, with a maximum number of troops and increased visibility. "We knew we had to continue driving the turn towards a Yes vote and demonstrate to voters and in particular the No campaign that the wind was behind us, and that we were turning the debate," states Dwyer, who had invited **Ireland for Europe** campaign Director, Pat Cox, to join the canvass in Wicklow on the last weekend.

An impressive contingent of more than twenty blue-and-yellow T-shirt clad volunteers and canvassers, including Newstalk's CEO Frank Cronin, his daughter Martha, Bray residents Colm Fagan, Kieran Leonard, Sarah Gahon, Ian Gahon and Martin Sorohan. They were joined by the Greystones contingent Tim Cahill, John Cahill, Dermod Dwyer, Emmet McGarry, Bart Storan his local Generation Yes members.

Together with Regina O'Connor and the indomitable Mary Clissmann, they all amassed in Bray for the critical Saturday morning canvass. Cox, Dwyer and the team swooped on the busy streets of the county's largest town, hitting bookstores and butchers, cafés and charity shops. The reception was immense, both for Cox and for the Wicklow for Europe team. The contingent was followed through the town by a questioning senior Euro-sceptic journalist from the UK's Daily Mail! On the following day at a rally in Dublin, Cox met Bray resident and Minister for Europe, Dick Roche.



The Minister instantly invited him to join him and his Polish ministerial counterpart on a canvass later that evening of North Wicklow churches. Cox duly accepted. Joined by his wife, daughter and grandchildren, Cox called Dwyer who rounded up a flying-squad of volunteers to join them as they led the *Wicklow for Europe* contingent outside 5 o'clock mass at the Queen of Peace Church on Bray's Vevey Road, continuing on to the 6pm mass at Kilcoole and then on to the Holy Rosary Church in Greystones. "In the entirety of the campaign," says Dwyer, "it was the only time that we came across any other party activists."

With polling day upon the group, *Wicklow for Europe* issued its closing clarion call to voters to get out and vote, regardless of their voting intentions, and to grasp our future. The final media announcement led by Dwyer would urge voters to recognise October 2nd as a 'Day of Destiny' for the county and for the country, and would be crafted to maximise voter turnout, seen as crucial to securing the maximum possible Yes vote. "Our message in those dying days was simple – now was a time to rise above political and sectional interests and to strive for national unity," says Dwyer. "We focused on urging everybody to reflect on our collective future and to put Ireland first."

The campaign was done. Now, the opportunity to choose, rested in the hands of every Wicklow voter. October 2nd, the 'Day of Destiny' would be an anxious wait.

On the morning of polling, *Wicklow for Europe's* master of the SMS text, Stephen Kearon, issued almost 1,200 texts urging recipients to get out and vote Yes to secure the country's future. He also organised a troupe of people to monitor turnout at polling stations. It was clear the turnout was well up on Lisbon I. But early exits polls indicated a knife-edge result.

For other volunteers, such as Jane Dignam, the countdown to the official Wicklow count in Greystones was excruciating. "I didn't sleep at all that night. Even though the late exit polls were calling a victory nationally, I was truly afraid to believe that we would win in Wicklow and what we would do if we hadn't."

Wicklow for Europe were at the count forty five minutes before it opened at 9am the following morning in the new Greystones Leisure Complex. Kearon had his laptop under his one good arm, while Dermot Dwyer instructed all to don their T-shirts, including newly-recruited tallyers daughter Caroline and her husband Ronan, Emmet McGarry, Peter Nolan, and Jane Dignam with husband Charles.

After a first heart-stopping blip (Arklow's first box returned a majority No vote), it soon became apparent that Arklow was now going Yes – a significant result as the south Wicklow town had returned one of highest No votes in Lisbon I. Soon, Baltinglass, Blessington, Bray and Greystones, followed. It was clear that Wicklow had said Yes and had said Yes in spectacular fashion.



Wicklow for Europe's forecast 70.28% Yes vote in the tally was extremely accurate when compared to the final actual result of 70.75%. The Yes vote in electoral areas was equally as impressive: Arklow voted 61.15% Yes; Baltinglass 66.18%; Bray 71.19%; Greystones 76.45%; Wicklow 74.31%; East Carlow 72.87%; and Postal 73.16%. In total, 58,944 (67.90%) of Wicklow's 86,812 electorate turned out to vote, with 41,540 casting their votes for the Yes campaign – a majority of 24,366 (41.50%).

"It was Tim Bourke's initial phone call that led to the launch of what would be a short and intensely focused campaign," says Dermot Dwyer, "and as each volunteer answered our calls to step up to the mark, the group grew and the campaign took off. Our plan of action was organic and original, and the enthusiasm was infectious, and our goal was clear – the referendum in Wicklow must be won. Time was short. Without exception everyone played his or her part, took responsibility and immediately did the job. All believed, and combined delivered a momentous result. It was a privilege to be part of it. Thank you all".

For my part, as Communications Director, I really believe that the size of the prize that we were campaigning for kept us completely focused on what we could deliver. Personally, it's one of the proudest periods of my life, and I feel truly honoured to have played some small role in setting history in our county, and privileged to have worked with one of the most remarkable teams in on one of the most remarkable campaigns.

Jason Cooke is from Wicklow and is Head of Communications at Airtricity.

WICKLOW 'YES' CAMPAIGN



Mobile Unit

8ft x 4ft Banner ►



A2 Posters



WICKLOW 'YES' CAMPAIGN

Ireland for Europe - Wicklow

- Voluntary group of concerned citizens
- Not aligned to any political party
- Helped by voluntary donations in the Wicklow area
- Came together to canvass for a YES vote for the Lisbon Treaty on 2nd October

Steering committee: John Cahill, Mary Clissman, Jason Cooke, Dermot Dwyer (Chairman), Kieran Leonard, Emmet McGarry, Bart Storan, Jody Wheatley.

Wicklow for Europe is a non-political, citizen movement campaigning for a YES vote in Wicklow.



Patrons in Ireland for Europe include Pat Cox, Mary Davis, The Edge, Garret Fitzgerald, Dennis Hickey, Robbie Keane, Seamus Heaney, Brigid Laffan, Peter Sutherland, Jim O'Hara.

**I am Wicklow
I am YES** 

**Vote YES on
Friday 2nd October**
to ratify the Treaty of
Lisbon and secure
our place in Europe.

To find out more please visit
irelandforeurope.ie

Leaflet

Badge ▶



◀ Tee-shirt

**We support
YES** 
in Wicklow



Wicklow for Europe is a non-political,
citizens movement campaigning
for a YES vote in Europe.

To find out more please visit irelandforeurope.ie

Sample Press ADs

**Business in Wicklow
are supporting the
YES** 
vote on Oct 2nd
WHY DON'T YOU!

Wicklow for Europe is a non-political,
Citizens Lobby Group campaigning
for a YES vote in Europe.

To find out more please visit irelandforeurope.ie

WICKLOW FOR EUROPE

Dermod Dwyer (Group Leader)

Jason Cooke
Emmet McGarry
Jody Wheatley
Kieran Leonard
Mary Clissman
Alan Byrne
Joey Byrne
Paddy O'Toole
Joe Hayden
Peter Nolan
Denis Dwyer
Jurate Ivoskiene
Stephen Kearon
Martin Sorohan
Jane Dignam
William Quill
Tom Colstello
Kevin Kelly (CMP Sisk)
Treasury Holdings
Ritz Carlton Powerscourt
Pat Casey
Sarah Slazenger
Simon Pratt
Brendan Newsome
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