



Progress continues on plans for Ratoath's new designated youth space

RATOATH is the fastest-growing town in Ireland with the youngest population, according to the 2006 Census, with the highest proportion of young people in Ireland aged 0–14, and with 32 per cent of the village's population under the age of 14.

While there is an excellent provision of youth and sports facilities in Ratoath, a gap in facilities for young people of a certain age to spend leisure time has been identified. As a result, young people tend to socialise outdoors in large groups, wandering Ratoath with nowhere to go and nothing to do at the weekends.

An alcohol-free place for teenagers to simply hang out with friends, chat, drink coffee or a soft drink, watch TV or movies or surf the internet was suggested as a further facility for our young people in the area. Further research among young people in the Ratoath

area suggested they would relish an opportunity to have a safe place to 'chill out' and socialise with their friends.

A voluntary committee was established in October 2008, consisting of adults and teenagers from the Ratoath area. This group has been meeting regularly since then. The main aim is to introduce a designated space for the youth of Ratoath.

A business plan was prepared by transition year students of the **YSI (Young Social Innovator)** class in Ratoath College with guidance and support from some adult members of the committee. They came up with the idea for a centre which they are calling Pulse.

Pulse's main aim is to achieve the ideal model that will provide a space to simply hang out with friends. It is also envisaged the space will include entertainment or leisure services chosen by the young people

themselves along with information on State and local services of interest and relevance to young people, including education and training, and healthcare, both physical and emotional.

The target group will be initially 15 to 18 year-olds. The space for the young people will be run by the youth themselves with an adult committee formed to advise on policies as well as to discuss fundraising. The management committee will be made up of young people and adult volunteers.

At the moment, the main aims are fundraising, advertising and marketing the project and running and managing the facility as a small business enterprise. It is the hope that Pulse will become a pillar of the community providing a positive image of the youth of Ratoath, not only for today's youth but also for future generations.