



Waterford City Council enhances customer care through career development

The Tall Ships.

Changing technology and higher client expectations now drive the services sector. The value of an engineer/technician can no longer be judged solely on his/her formal education background but increasingly by how up-to-date their skills set is and how he/she interacts with other professionals and end users. Recognising this, Waterford City Council is committed to the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of all its engineers and technicians. Aideen Jacob, Training Officer and Frank Roche, Senior Engineer, outline the extent of that commitment and the practical impact it has had on the Authority.

In 2004, Waterford City Council spent almost twice the national recommended spend on training as a percentage of total productive payroll (5.8%). It is important that it receives a good return on this level of investment and one of the ways this can be realised is by continuing to improve what it does and how it does it - essentially adopting best management practice in all areas of activity.

The challenges involved in successfully pursuing accreditation under the Engineers Ireland CPD Accreditation Scheme have helped ensure that the Council continually strives for the highest standards achievable and benchmark itself alongside comparable organisations in the public and private sector.

Laying foundations

The foundations laid by the Council's achievement of the FÁS Excellence through People award in 2003 placed the Council in an ideal position to pursue further accreditation and it set its sights on the Engineers Ireland CPD Scheme. Continuing professional development encourages engineers and technicians to take responsibility and ownership for setting and achieving clear

targets for their learning and development. It also recognises the importance of non-traditional training activities such as knowledge sharing, mentoring and on-the-job learning by doing. Working closely alongside external consultants and multi-disciplinary teams is promoted as a significant tool for CPD among engineering staff in Waterford City Council. This team-working exposes staff to new ideas and best practices within engineering and to the broad range of disciplines that make up a modern project team.

Waterford Outer Ring Road

The recently completed construction of the new €37m Outer Ring Road allowed a number of City Council staff to experience contracting on a major scale. The continuing professional development benefits to them will become apparent over the coming months as the personnel return to their jobs within the Council. This will manifest itself in the preparation, supervision and administration of contracts for a variety of small and medium-sized schemes around the city.

Staff highlighted a number of areas in which they believe their

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The achievement of CPD accreditation is timely as the new Performance Management Development System (PMDS) will be rolled out in Waterford City Council by the end of this year, some 12 months ahead of the national target date.

core skills have been enhanced, including

- Project management
- Delivery of value for money
- Understanding of contract documents especially in relation to road projects
- Contract law and its application
- Staff management
- Conflict resolution

Tall Ships' Races 2005

The hosting of the Tall Ships event was an unprecedented success for Waterford, attracting 450,000 visitors over four days in July and showcasing the city to a huge national and international audience. The value of the event to the local economy was estimated to be €30m and the publicity aspect worth an additional €6m. The public aspects of the event were organised and managed primarily by the City Council in partnership with the Gardaí and Bus Éireann, with Sail Training International looking after the race details. During the peak day on July 8, an estimated 200,000 people attended the event site and up to 120 buses were used on the free park & ride services. The main N25 route through the city's quays was pedestrianised for three days so that participants and visitors could enjoy the spectacle in safety and comfort. A temporary detour route, with junctions manned by Gardaí, was in operation.

The following areas of the work have been identified as significant learning experiences for staff:

- Hosting and managing a large-scale international event
- Working as part of a multi-disciplinary team including Gardaí, Civil Defence, Port of Waterford, Chamber of Commerce, marketing professionals and others
- Major traffic diversion and management over a sustained period
- Organising and operating a large scale 'park and ride' system
- Team building and management
- Interaction with local and national media

Waterford City Green Routes

In line with the city's Planning Land Use and Transportation Strategy (PLUTS), Waterford City Council is currently working



on two bus priority projects. TPI and DBFL Engineers are the external consultants. Both of these projects require a major rethink of priorities in traffic management for the city in consultation with various stakeholders. In particular, possible loss of on-street parking and dedication of space to public transport and cyclists will redefine policy. 'Park and ride' sites and possible use of an existing light-gauge rail network are being considered. In both these projects, City Council staff are working closely with the consultants in a unified team. Visits to other cities to see current best practice are planned as the Council seeks to learn from international experience. Staff will encounter a number of new areas of work under this next phase of work, including modern urban traffic management involving bus priority and the development of a possible permanent 'park and ride' system.

Performance management

The achievement of the Engineers Ireland CPD accreditation is also very timely as the new Performance Management Development System (PMDS) will be implemented across all local authorities over the next 18 months. Waterford City Council decided to roll out PMDS for the entire organisation by the end of this year. Working in the city context, it was decided that the implementation throughout the entire organisation would be more beneficial because its impact in any one area would affect all. That in turn has created a willingness by the employees to accept, engage and progress the process for both personal and organisational development. A core element of the PMDS is employee training and development and this is very much in line with the ethos of continuing professional development that underpins the Engineers Ireland Scheme.

The benefits of attaining the award include the validation and



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independent recognition of our policies and good organisational practices. Engineers Ireland has also provided us with recommendations for further best practice development and these will become our training and development goals for the coming year; ensuring that we continue to improve as an organisation. The Waterford City Council management team sees CPD as a further opportunity to underline the Council's ongoing commitment to improving and developing the careers of the engineering and technical personnel within the organisation in order to deliver the objectives set out in the Corporate Plan 2005-2009. The management team actively encourages and supports career development throughout the organisation as a key means of improving customer care. Φ

Team-working exposes staff to new ideas and best practices within engineering and to the broad range of disciplines that make up a modern project team.

Waterford Main Drainage Scheme Phase 2 - Siphon Construction.



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