

**I**MAGINE your neighbour-  
hood. When there's trouble outside, no one calls the gardai; they won't come, especially not after dark. There are cameras throughout your estate — no one seems to be manning them.

Guns shoot as drug deals go sour; people get stabbed; and you lie awake at night, worried about the unoccupied house next door, because it draws unwelcome nocturnal activity. Young lads, off their heads, given to lighting fires and violent acts, haunt these abandoned buildings.

Now, imagine that sense of despair and abandonment lifting with the news that your area is to be 're-generated'.

Millions and billions are to be spent — to make sure you, your family and your good neighbours can have a quality of life. Like every other Irish citizen.

Well, it's been five long years since John Fitzgerald (former Dublin City manager) published a report on how two newly created State agencies could combine with community groups to create a way forward for Limerick City.

According to the residents of the earmarked estates — Moyross, St Mary's, Southill and Ballinacurra Weston — little has happened since this optimistic glimpse of the future was unveiled. That is, other than the destruction and sundering of their communities.

The following is what they say about the efforts to rebuild and remediate the physical and human environments in theirs, the most deprived areas.

**TOMMY DALY: MOYROSS RESIDENTS' ALLIANCE**

"Moyross, the Southills, and the Ballinacurra Westons, they were all let down by society, by the councils, by the governments and the guards. "If these areas were patrolled properly years ago — instead of forgetting about the people — you wouldn't have the problems we have today," says Tommy Doyle, chairperson of Moyross Residents' Alliance. "We're just communities left there. Left there to rot. I know it. I live in Delmege Park in Moyross. Ring a guard; say something anti-social happened. They wouldn't come out. We've been let down badly ... It's a broken-down community. People are between walls. And they don't know if they're to be knocked. The only voice they have out there is the likes of us," says Tommy, as he stands outside the derelict shop in his estate.

**IT'S A DISGRACE. JUST LOOK AT THE STATE OF THE PLACE. REGENERATION IS NOT ABOUT STATE AGENCIES OR EVEN BUILDINGS. IT'S ABOUT PEOPLE. PEOPLE'S LIVES**

— Tommy Daly

Two years ago, the shop was burnt out. Today, its charred remains, boarded doors and windows, are a stark reminder of how things change here. In an instant, a lifetime's work can be extinguished; only for the despoiled aftermath to cast a pall.

But what about the Limerick Regeneration programme? "Well, they've spent a pile. But all that's gone, and nothing to show for it. Just demolition. If you're building something, you can see it, and see that you got value for your money. There's no value in millions gone, and nothing," says Tommy.

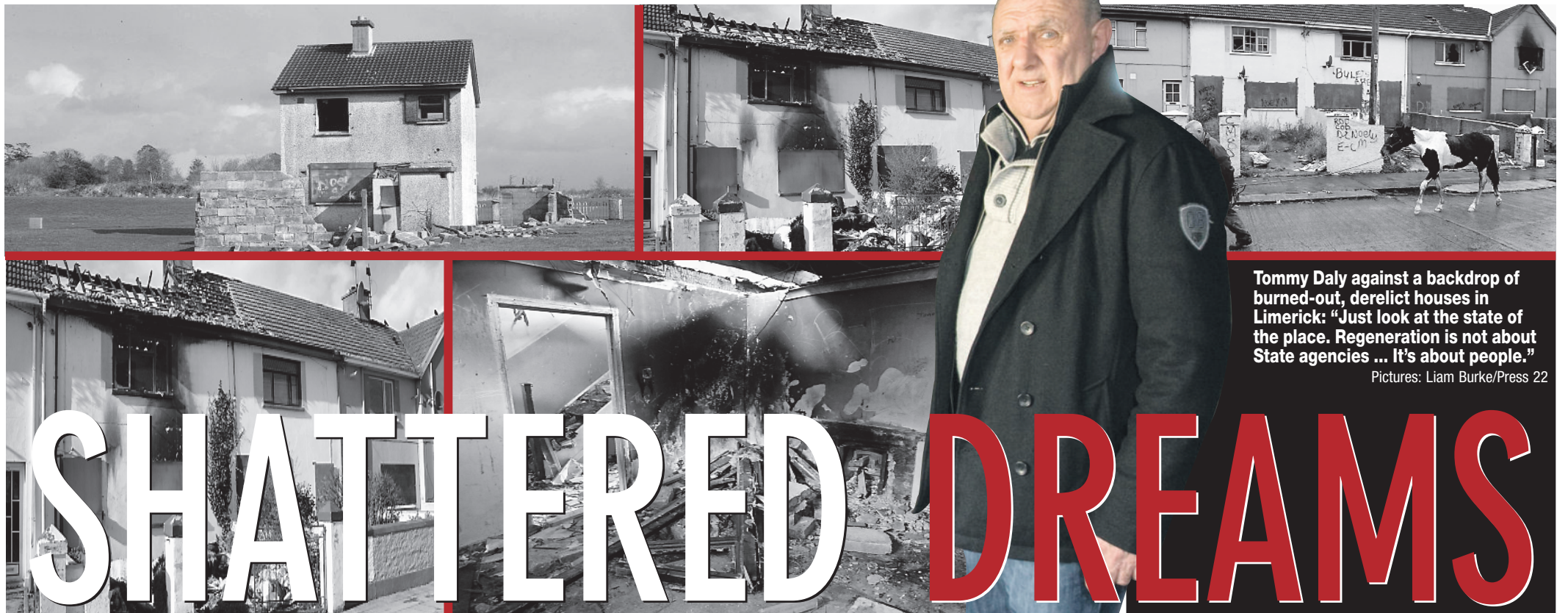
"All you have now is people demoralised," he says. "They don't know if they're coming or going. Come into Moyross, and you'll see big gaping holes. Houses ripped out, all over the place — 113 in Delmege Park alone. There were more than 1,000 houses in Moyross. And 400 of them knocked."

Tommy has looked elsewhere for alternative approaches. "What they could have done, all along the way, was knock five (houses) and build five. This happened up in Cherry Orchard and Fatima Mansions in Dublin. Big success. People weren't displaced. That was the way to go. But they didn't do that," he says.

"They just didn't know what they were doing. It was morally wrong what they did. It's a disgrace," he says.



In the first of a two-part series on Limerick Regeneration, **David Young** talks to locals who are disillusioned by broken promises and broken homes



Tommy Daly against a backdrop of burned-out, derelict houses in Limerick: "Just look at the state of the place. Regeneration is not about State agencies ... It's about people." Pictures: Liam Burke/Press 22

"Just look at the state of the place. Regeneration is not about State agencies. Or even buildings. It's about people. People's lives."

But has any building even started? "Yes. They're building in Cliona Park. And the first units — 33 of them — will be ready by October. But there are 400 people gone. And they're never coming back. This is the problem. An exodus."

"If a mother of four leaves Moyross, she takes her family with her," he says. "I can't ask her to put her kids back into Corpus Christi school. And so now, there's only half the pupils there once were. This is all being hidden."

"The head of the Limerick Regeneration Agency, Brendan Kenny, said 'I don't want these people leaving regeneration areas. I want them to stay'. Things are worse now," says Tommy.

"Everything we do is on www.mrlimerick.com. If not, there'd be no evidence of what they're doing," he says. "When we went to the EU, we brought photographs. A Romanian MEP called it a third world developing country."

"As a result we got €500,000 to clean up Limerick City. Now if we didn't do that ... who was going to do it? And that's documentary proof. If these issues were being looked at, we wouldn't have to go abroad to the EU — to fight a corner for the people of Ireland."

**JAMIE DALY**

"There are days, now, when you'd look at the houses around you. And you'd get depressed. It does affect the way you'd feel and think. I said I'd never let things like that bother me. But ... you know what? It's got me down. I'm 27. It started when I was twenty-two," says Tommy Daly's son, Jamie.

"Millions spent. And what? The place is worse than when they started. I'm so pissed off. There's so much talent in the kids around the place, but nothing's been done for them," he says, despondently. "It costs €20 for a decent soccer ball. Not a million."

"This 'regen-



**REGENERATION SHOULD BE ABOUT BUILDING DREAMS. ABOUT CHANNELLING KIDS AND GETTING THEM GOING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. BUT THAT'S NOT HAPPENING. I'VE NEVER SEEN THINGS SO BAD ...**

— Jamie Daly

**DISPLACEMENT**

One of the striking traits of Limerick's Regeneration Programme is the displacement of families from both northside and southside areas. By Nov 2011, the figure had reached 1,000 families.

The number one reason for relocating cited by those choosing to leave remains anti-social behaviour.

Tenants in social housing can be relocated in other estates in Limerick City or county, or other counties, whereas home owners are presented with the following choices.

- 1 Wait for their new house to be built.
- 2 Sell their home to the council at the 'market' rate: €30 — €80K, depending on the area.
- 3 Give up their home in exchange for €35K compensation, and take rented accommodation elsewhere in the city.
- 4 Accept a 'deeds' exchange, taking another house within the regeneration area.

eration?" he says. "It's the biggest load of rubbish. My community is weaker than it ever was.

"Listen, I could tell you a story about a little boy. How one day, he was a menace to society. Around the roads, breaking windows in cars and houses. I took him under my wing. Got him playing football. And a month later, this same little boy comes back into the avenue. And he's got a soccer ball in his hand. Not a stone," Jamie says.

"Regeneration should be about building dreams. About channelling kids. And getting them going in the right direction," he says.

"But that's not happening. I've never seen things so bad. I'm shocked there are people getting paid who aren't doing their jobs.

That's why I'm in a rage ... There's money going into regeneration. But it's not going anywhere near my child," says Jamie, his mind made up to move out.

**TERESA KELLY**

Teresa Kelly is a young mother of three, living in the end house in Delmege Park. The property adjoining hers is empty and a magnet for anti-social behaviour.

"Everyone I go to keeps pawning me off. I'd say it's been about four years since someone was living beside me," says Teresa.

"That's when the trouble began. There was a fire in there. And ever since, it's been boarded up."

"Not much damage, though. They could've done it up 'cos it was a good house," she says.

"I go to 'Regeneration' (the Regeneration Agency) and they say go to City Council. And at City Council, they say ... go to 'Regeneration'. Neither of them will answer my questions. So, we just give up asking. We just expect them at the door one morning. Coming to knock the place."

"They don't seem to be doing anything with the house, though, and the place is only getting worse. So, it's probably better go-



Teresa Kelly: "We just expect them at the door one morning. Coming to knock the place."

**IMPACT ON SCHOOLS**

**Corpus Christi National School — Moyross (Northside)**  
2007: Pupils enrolled — 272  
2011: Pupils enrolled — 171

**Our Lady of Lourdes National School — Rosbrien (Southside)**  
2007: Pupils enrolled — 224  
2011: Pupils enrolled — 188

**Southill Junior School**  
2007: Pupils enrolled 71 (All walked to school)  
2011: Pupils enrolled 61 (Most are bussed in from other areas around the city)

**SOCIAL HOUSING**

Limerick City is unique in its concentration of 'social housing'. In the City Council area, 8,000 of the 18,900 houses were constructed as social housing, according to the John Fitzgerald report, 2007. Fitzgerald concluded that this posed specific problems and challenges for the region.

In Brendan Kenny's estimation, CEO of Limerick Regeneration, this figure has greatly reduced, thanks to the tenant-purchase scheme, where people bought out their houses from the local authority.

However, where this usually has a stabilising effect on an area, Mr Kenny asserted this hadn't happened in Limerick, even though the social housing figure had dropped to about 19% of all housing within the city boundary.

ing at this stage," she says. "Young fellas come up and try and take the window boards off — to get inside. Or they'll be in around the back, breaking in. I remember, not too long after the place was first burnt, when they set a fire, my upstairs filled with smoke. My kids were asleep in bed and I was in the living room," Teresa says. "I spotted smoke coming through the walls. The fire brigade had to rush upstairs to get my children."

"What about the future? "I do want them (the council and Regeneration agency) to clean up the estate, and just tell us what they're doing. I wouldn't like to leave Moyross; I've got good neighbours. That's what keeps me here."

**BROTHER THOMAS**

"It's not so much what we do here. It's more about being here," says Brother Thomas, one of five Franciscan monks living in Moyross since 2009.

"We run an after-school programme for the little ones, and a youth club for the teenage kids. And maybe, once or twice a month, we'll go somewhere at weekends. There are movie nights too. You know — simple stuff."

"I have to be honest with you, my belief is that 'regeneration' isn't just structures, it's people. That's what we're trying to do here. To bring dignity — to help people understand their values. Their importance."

"The last three neighbourhoods in Moyross are kind of ... I guess. How would you say this?" he says. "Just not on the radar. Sometimes, people feel Moyross stops at the community centre. I don't see too many people coming down here. Not too many councillors."

"Hence, there's a fragmentation of all things 'community' in Moyross. For those trying to pull the place and its people together, it's nigh on impossible to stem the momentum against them. The meetings that are held are more to do with buildings, and less to do with the people living here," he says.

"Most of the kids I've been dealing with here are fantastic," he says.

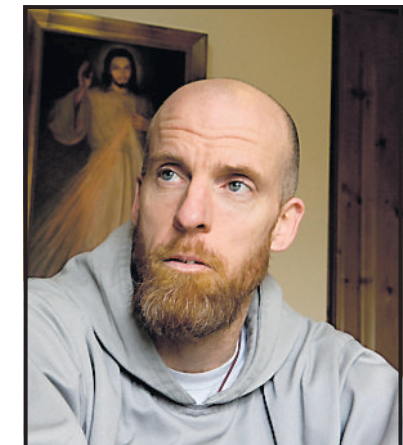
"There's definitely diamonds here ... in the rough. And it's a beautiful thing. There's no pretension here," he says. "What you see is what you get. It's refreshing. A bit like people in the Bronx. They won't hide and dance around issues. They'll come forth. That's why they make very good Christians."

"Moyross doesn't need a 'regeneration' per se. It needs a revival. In the deeper sense, Regeneration sometimes means bringing back old structures."

"And old structures maybe need to just go away. Maybe even old thought patterns, and prejudices," he says.

**DEMOLITION/CONSTRUCTION**

**HOUSE NUMBERS**  
**Knocked:** 900 and counting, since 2007  
**Built:** 33 to be completed by October/November 2012  
**Remediation/Rebuilding:** 3,000 identified at outset  
**Remaining:** 2,000 approximately  
**Northside** (Moyross & St Mary's Park): refurbish 50% ; rebuild 50%  
**Southside** (Southill & Ballinacurra Weston): demolish 100%



"It's not so much what we do here. It's more about being here," says Brother Thomas, one of five monks living in the area.

**TOMORROW: Brendan Kenny of the Regeneration agency answers the critics ... >>>**

**Limerick has no Gregory on its side**

**T**HIRTY years ago this month, a young TD named Tony Gregory held a government to ransom. Having found himself holding the balance of power, Gregory brokered a development deal of £100m for Dublin's inner city. Not everyone approved of the 'Gregory deal.' Members of Charles Haughey's government resented this 'guttersnipe' who had extracted so much from them, while others objected on principle: when the country was facing economic crisis, it was wrong to siphon off much-needed funds to help one area. To critics, the 'Gregory deal' was evidence of something rotten in Irish politics: the brazen willingness of one man — Charles Haughey — to buy political power. Gregory had no such qualms. He saw the deal as 'morally essential'. Dublin's inner city was the most deprived urban area in Ireland, a squalid, crumbling wreck. It had been for decades and would have remained so be-

**SEÁN MONCRIEFF ON wednesday**



cause the political class didn't care about it. In theory, the principled objections to the 'Gregory deal' are correct. On a smaller scale, local deals to win the support of individual TDs have undermined the idea of a national parliament representing all people equally. What few assets the State possesses will be distributed on the basis of need, but only after those with political leverage carry off a few prizes. It was, and still is, dishonest. It's corrupt.

Gregory knew this. Gregory knew that in an ideal world the government should have been rushing to help Dublin's inner city regardless: because that was the place of greatest need. But circumstances were far from ideal, and within a few months the GUBU revelations brought down the Haughey government and the 'Gregory deal' and gave citizens another brief glimpse into the rottenness of political life in this country. The parallels between this and parts of

modern-day Limerick barely need pointing out. Except that Limerick doesn't have a Gregory and so had to pin its hopes on grandiose promises that evaporated as soon as they were uttered. We have had our GUBU revelations in the shape of last week's Mahon report, depicting a system bunged up with corruption: even those who were not corrupt allowed it to go on; and all for the sake of politics.

All these things are connected. To deploy the cliché, governments have to make tough choices. But as Gregory pointed out, there is also the morally essential: and to abandon the hopeless and the helpless because of political expediency is the first sign of moral weakness.

From there, it's a short walk to looking the other way when a brown paper envelope is handed over; to politicians too scared to ask themselves why they went into politics in the first place.