

Barrowhouse GAA Club and Community Walking Track



The Barrowhouse GAA club and community opened a walking track around their GAA grounds in March 2014.

This new facility has been welcomed by all generations of the local community. The walking track offers the community a safe place to walk, which is off narrow country roads, and there are other people around for company. It is close to the school so parents are using it to get exercise after dropping children to school; they are also getting a walk in when the children are at GAA training. All generations of the community are availing of the walking track to get exercise at a pace that suits themselves.



The community are also looking forward to the opening of a playgroup on the site in April 2014. Families spoke about the opportunities the development will provide for all members of the family to be active in a very sociable and community friendly environment; members of the family can find a physical activity to suit themselves from playing Gaelic, to walking, to playing in the playground.

From a green field site in August 2009, Barrowhouse GAA Club and Community have constructed two playing pitches, a walking track, a children's play area and a temporary dressing rooms/clubhouse. The idea behind this project from the outset was that the

facilities would be used by as many people in the community as possible as opposed to traditional club members only.

A development committee, which drew in people from the club and the local community, came together to organise the purchase and development of a site and to raise the necessary funding to cover the cost of the project. A development draw was put in place over a 3 year period and people from the club, the local community and surrounding areas generously supported this fundraiser. In addition, grant aid was secured from the National Lottery, Laois Leader and the GAA.

Having rented fields for many years, the Barrowhouse GAA club purchased a new site for its club grounds in 2004. The focus of the development for this site was on providing a facility for the whole community. With this in mind the development plans for the new site included:

- **A walking track around the main pitch:** The track itself was built by volunteers from the local community who gave their time and resources to complete this project.



- **A playground:** Laois Leader funding has facilitated the construction of a state of the art playground which will be opened in April 2014.
- **A gym:** Gym equipment has been purchased and set up in the temporary club house, the group have plans to make this available to the community for use by all.
- **A club house:** Currently the club is operating out of a temporary building. They plan to construct a permanent club house that includes a community café and meeting area.

Other facilities that the community have suggested are a handball alley, floodlighting and a hurling/football wall.

The inclusion of these facilities at the GAA club grounds is allowing young and old from the community to use this facility to help maintain a healthier lifestyle in a safe and community friendly way. The Barrowhouse GAA club grounds have thus become a focal point for community physical activity and social events.