

DELEGATION FROM BRITTANY VISITS DOAGH

A DELEGATION of six representatives from Mont-Dol Initiatives visited Doagh as guests of the Doagh Village Community Association and FORD (Focus On Re-imaging Doagh) recently.

The visitors were in the area from 11-17 November as participants in a reciprocal visit, having hosted a group from Doagh in September of this year.

The main purpose of the two fact-finding exercises was to give both groups the opportunity to learn from each other's approaches to building innovative and inclusive programmes within their respective communities. They were also determined that this venture would mark the beginning of a firm friendship between both associations and the communities they serve.

The concept arose following a brief visit to Mont-Dol earlier in the summer by a member of the Doagh Village Community Association who gave a presentation to the MDI of life in this part of Northern Ireland. Both Mont-Dol and Doagh are rural villages similar in size and population. They are situated close to larger towns and are within 30 minutes from much larger cities.

There are many other parallels between the communities and it was felt that both areas could benefit greatly by exploring each other's successful projects and the methods they have employed to overcome difficulties which have arisen from time to time.

Following the presentation in June, M. Jacques Rouquette, president of the MDI, invited a delegation from DVCA and FORD to visit Mont-Dol as their guests.

This successful mission took place and in response a reciprocal invitation was extended to the committee of the MDI. M. Rouquette and five of his committee arrived last week for a six day visit and returned to Mont-Dol on Saturday evening having flavoured life in South East Antrim and met with many local people and the projects they work on.

Already several exciting inter-village projects have been planned and agreed and work has begun in implementing these activities. These include classical and folk concerts, photographic exhibitions, local economy and tourism boosting initiatives and opportunities to engage in youth exchanges and family holidays. Invitations have also been extended to local and central government departments to examine several initiatives

which are in line with their current policies and targets for the near future.

Another short planning visit to Mont-Dol has been arranged for mid-December when firm meetings will take place between local key agencies and individuals.

Much has been achieved in a short time and both DVCA and FORD are to hasten slowly to ensure that progress made in the relationship with MDI will include the widest possible involvement of both communities to ensure that all will benefit from the initiative.

An informal public meeting took place on Thursday evening (Nov 15) in Doagh Primary School which gave the people of Doagh a chance to learn a little of the Mont-Dol Community and to meet with Jacques and his colleagues.

It is hoped that everyone from the voluntary, statutory and business community currently working hard to benefit the people of Doagh will come together to build an even more cohesive community. In Brittany there is a determination that everyone works together, regardless of age. A similar approach here would also have a lasting impact throughout the area.

For pictures see page 2.



Jacques Rouquette and Franise Le Ber meet with Dr William McCrea se4728