



## Volunteering with HIV / AIDS Organisation in Zambia, One of Africa's Poorest Country's



*Mark at the Irish Embassy in Lusaka, Zambia*

As mentioned in my August update, I was fortunate to be selected by the Voluntary Services Overseas [VSO](#) to work on a short term placement in Zambia with an organisation named [ZARAN](#). ZARAN (Zambia AIDS Law Research and Advocacy Network) lobby for rights of people living with HIV and AIDS.

My cousin Anne Daly accompanied me on this trip and has been invaluable to me. Not only did she assist me in my many, many meetings but she also took time to help me prepare in the weeks leading up to the trip.

Despite their shortage of staff ZARAN have had success in pressuring the Zambian Government in improving the situation for sufferers, particularly in relation to employment rights. My input here is to advise them how to lobby Zambian Members of Parliament more effectively and how to maximise media coverage for their work.

While in Zambia I will make the 6 hour road trip to [The Alan Kerins' Project](#) in Western Zambia to see for myself the great work Alan has been doing. To read what I have been doing on a day to day basis, click [here](#) to visit my blog.

## **Killarney Health Service Executive Land Deal- Not a Great Deal for Community Organisations**

Many community organisations have hoped to benefit from the land bank around the St Finian's Hospital in Killarney (The hospital is well known to Munster Fianals as the large building behind the commentary box!). Unfortunately, local groups will be disappointed to hear that the HSE, in all its wisdom, have done a deal with a consortium.

The consortium, if reports are true, have in turn arranged a deal with a pharmacy which will mean they will have use of the land for free. This is a blatant attempt by the HSE to avoid political scrutiny. They have chosen to lease the land to the consortium rather than sell it thus avoiding Ministerial Approval Requirements.

I have written to community organisations in Killarney proposing a meeting of all Public Representatives and voluntary groups in the area to plan a strategy for what the best use of the land would be for the people of Kerry.

## **Cromwell's Bridge land a Step Closer to Public Ownership**



*Cromwell's Bridge, an important local heritage site in Kenmare*

When I initially spoke to Kerry County Council about taking ownership of the unique Cromwell's Bridge they told me that they did not have the capacity to maintain it and therefore would not take charge of it.

I then informed the Council that there was a condition in the planning relating to an adjoining development in which the developer had agreed to hand it over but the Council again said they would not take responsibility.

It was only when I pointed out to them that they could not pick and choose which planning conditions they would enforce and which they would not that they are now putting into motion the necessary procedures for the land to be handed over to the public.

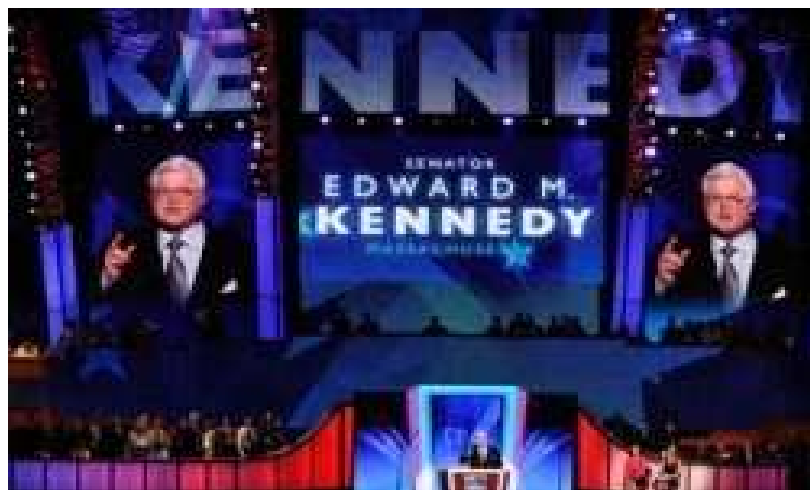
## See Photos of My Trip to the Democratic National Convention in Denver



*Mark with the a volunteer at the DNC in Denver*

Politicians are strange people for when we are not working we go to political events anyway, such was my summer holiday!

Many thanks to all the volunteers, Taylor Foshee, McKenzie Young, Erin Moffet and Renee Katherine Zale, who got me into a place that only they could know about! The highlight was being on the convention floor with all the delegates for Senator Ted Kennedy's address.



*Senator Ted Kennedy's address to the Democratic Party*

Thanks also to Kevin Sullivan who saved me a four hour queue getting into hear Obama's acceptance speech and Noel Hickey.

Special thanks to my cousin Mary who got me the tickets to everything- everyone should have cousins like Mary!

To view more pictures of the Convention click [here](#)

## Irish Sign Language Week



*Mark with Liam Breen from Kenmare at his Citizenship Lecture in Dublin*

Irish Sign Language Week is an annual week of Events organised by the Irish Deaf Society to raise aware of Irish Sign Language (ISL) issues. As the Irish Deaf Society were one of the groups who nominated me to the Seanad they asked me to give a lecture on Citizenship and Language from a political perspective.

While preparing for the lecture I was reminded that, although the EU had recommended in 1988 and again in 1998, Sign Language should become an official language of each Member State, Ireland has yet to do this. In fact, Irish Sign Language is an official language in Northern Ireland but not in the rest of the country.

I have now drafted an Irish Sign Language Bill which I plan to present to my colleagues in the Oireachtas this term. With this draft of legislation I intend to raise awareness of the minority language of ISL and promote better understanding and attitudes towards the Deaf Community.

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