Reminders: Connemara West AGM will be held in The Ellis Hall, Letterfrack on Thursday 27th of September 2012 at 8pm. Shareholders 40th Birthday Buffet in Renvyle House Hotel on Sunday 30th September 2012, Ticket event.
Work has begun on the development of the new Astro Turf All Weather Pitch in Letterfrack. Measuring 60 metres by 35 metres the pitch should be available for use in October/November next. Floodlighting will be installed which will enable training to take place on the new surface during darkness hours in Winter and Spring. Fourteen contractors tendered for the construction of the pitch and the successful Tenderer was PST Sport, Tralee. PST Sport has installed similar pitches throughout the country and will also be providing Astro Turf goal areas and technical areas on the existing Community Sportsfield. Graham Heanue, Plant Hire, Renvyle is Sub-Contractor for the Civil Engineering Works on the new pitch. The finished cost will be in the region of €230,000 and is being funded through a grant from Forum Connemara Leader Programme and a loan from Tullycross Credit Union Ltd.

The Pitch will be available to all groups for training later this year. Hourly rates have still to be decided but bookings will be accepted by Connemara West Reception from September 03, 2012.

Community Services and Leisure Centre.
An attractive new design has been developed for the proposed Community Services and Leisure Centre at Letterfrack. The project was granted planning permission in 2009 but it was later decided to alter the design and to include more community services in the building such as a community laundry, kitchen and tearoom, a community gymnasium and space for physiotherapy and community health and welfare services. The new design will enable the building to be developed in phases if all of the required capital is not immediately available. It is estimated that the completed development will cost in the region of two million euro.

The main purpose of the development will be to provide sports facilities, activities, courses and programmes which will contribute to the general health and well being of the local community with a particular focus on youth.

The project is presently with the planning department of Galway County Council and is awaiting a Visual Impact Survey. If planning permission is granted then the onerous task of finding two million euro will being. Such a facility within the community would provide a range of outlets and opportunities for individuals and groups to participate in a healthy and active lifestyle.

1999 was the year when Social Housing was first mentioned as a project worth considering particularly with a view to providing housing for the elderly, who might wish to live in a village with shops, church and post office close by and also for emigrants wishing to return to Ireland. There would be no need to worry about securing a site and planning permission as all of that would be taken care of by others and all that was needed was to prove your eligibility by making the necessary application. It all seemed so simple back in 1999 but now 13 years later not a single house has been built and some of those people who expressed an interest and were excited by the idea in the early years have since died. Numerous meetings have been held and scores of letters have been written and as we once again head into autumn and winter, hope begins to fade that 2012 will be the year that the first sod will be turned.

However, all is not lost because we expect to hear within a matter of weeks that a number of social housing units have been sanctioned for Galway County Council and that 12 or 13 units will be allocated to Letterfrack.

In last year’s Annual Report we finished the report on Social Housing as follows, “in the present economic climate nothing is definite but we are keeping our fingers crossed that work should begin on the scheme around the middle of next year 2012”. We will now uncross our fingers and hope for the best for the coming year.
Connemara West is now in its 40th year as the company was incorporated on the 10th of December 1971 and the first meeting of the Board of Directors was held on the 16th of March 1972. Connemara West are delighted to be part of a number of events to celebrate its 40th year in community development in the Parish of Ballinakill.

On the 11th May 2012, President Michael D Higgins addressed the Irish Rural Link Conference in Ellis Hall. Irish Rural Link was founded in Letterfrack 21 years ago to represent the interests of rural communities who are affected by disadvantage or marginalisation by highlighting the problems, advocating appropriate responses and sharing best practice.

Connemara West were honoured that President Michael D Higgins and his wife Sabina paid a short visit to meet with Directors of Connemara West to congratulate them on the wonderful achievements of Connemara West over the past 40 years. The President was presented with a box and mirror made by students of The Furniture College at GMIT-Letterfrack. The President will open an exhibition of student work in Farmleigh in November 2012.

On the 23rd June, Connemara West sponsored a GAA U-16 seven aside competition on the community pitch in Letterfrack and the teams that took part were Renvyle, Naomh Feichin, Clifden, Oughterard and Leitir Mor and despite the rain, it was a very enjoyable occasion with Renvyle taking the Cup and Naomh Feichin taking the Shield. Connemara West would like to thank especially all the team trainers for making it a great day and also to Brendan Kane for his invaluable advice in making the day run so smoothly and many thanks to Jenny Heanue for the photos.

On the 28th of July, Connemara West sponsored the Pirate Queen cup and shield, which was held in the community pitch in Letterfrack and the weather held with a great turn out with teams from the Gráinne Mhaols, Louisburgh and the Westport Lions and Westport Tigers.

In the end the Westport Lions defeated Louisburgh in the cup final and the Gráinne Mhaols defeated the Westport Tigers in the Shield. The tournament was organised by Paul Gannon and the Gráinne Mhaols are planning that it will be an annual event. Many thanks to Tonya NicChuirrín, Chairperson of the Gráinne Mhaols for the photos.

In the autumn with the assistance of Finian Sheridan and the West Coast United Soccer club, a tournament will be organised, hopefully on the new Astro Turf pitch in Letterfrack.

On Sunday 13th May, the Launch of the DVD 'Seisiun at the Teach Ceoil' took place in the Renvyle House Hotel. The music was sublime with our own local Seisiun group and Colm O'Donnell and the Border Collies.

Connemara West are also planning a shareholders buffet with Music by Matt Cunningham on the 30th of September 2012 at 8pm in Renvyle House Hotel.

Connemara West would also like to extend special congratulations to our partners and colleagues at GMIT-Letterfrack who are celebrating 25 years of providing 3rd level courses in furniture design and technology and teaching training on the Letterfrack campus.
Maurice Sullivan RIP
Maurice Sullivan, a graduate of the Furniture Conservation and Restoration programme in 2004, died tragically in Malaysia in January 2011. In his memory, the College held a tree planting ceremony on Connemara West grounds followed by a service in Letterfrack Church in March and a number of Maurice’s family and friends attended this.

Farmleigh Exhibition
GMIT Letterfrack regularly hold exhibitions to promote student and graduate work throughout Ireland and in 2006 they held a major exhibition in Farmleigh Gallery in the Phoenix Park in Dublin. Due to its success they have now been invited by the management of Farmleigh Estate to mount another high end exhibition. This will run from 1st November – 20th December, 2012 and President Michael D. Higgins has been invited to open it. Exhibitions in prestigious venues such as this afford GMIT Letterfrack a valuable opportunity to display and promote the excellence, creativity, skill, and potential of students, graduates and the programmes run in Letterfrack to audiences along the eastern seaboard of Ireland.

Planning for this show is well underway and a visually exciting and dynamic show is envisaged. Graduates of the College have been invited to propose one to two high quality pieces made by them that may be considered for inclusion in this show. The theme being launched and promoted by this show is that GMIT Letterfrack is a National Centre of Excellence in Furniture Design and Technology.

Gaelscoil na Cruiche Project
The live project FDM 2 students undertook this year linked them with an extremely progressive Gaelscoil in Westport. Here, in a new school building, the students were given the challenge to design and make specific pieces for specified locations throughout the school. The process integrated pupils, parents, teachers with the students and the initial launch of the project was incredible with music and dancing performances by the children along with tours and information briefings by the parents and teachers. Two weeks later interim design presentations were made by the students and again pupils, parents and teachers from the school provided feedback on four rotating panels that were held in Letterfrack.

These combined experiences offered an excellent opportunity for students to learn, develop and understand the nuances of working and presenting their work to an actual client(s) and the resulting work is a credit to each of them.

The Furniture College
(A Partnership between Connemara West and Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology

The Furniture College Library
The College Library has proven to be a valuable asset in the development of the Letterfrack Furniture College. The Library provides the educational needs of over 250 students and 15 part and full-time staff members. The Furniture College Library book collection is approximately 3,600 titles and 36 current journals on display.

The book collection covers the main topics taught at the College such: Woodworking, Management, Marketing, Furniture Design and Production. It also has access to the total GMIT book collection exceeds 116,000 covering four different campuses. College staff and students also have access and can borrow, free of charge, books for the other I.T. Colleges in Ireland which has a total book collection of over 1.2 million books. The Library has an "open" access approach to its facilities and most of its furnishing was designed in-house by College Tutors and manufactured by the students as an on-going work project.

Letterfrack Public Library
The College library also houses the Letterfrack Public Library book collection, which is used by community. Letterfrack Public Library was re-opened in January 2012. There are a wide range of books to choose from including: adult fiction and non-fiction, children’s fiction and non-fiction, biographies, reference books and a selection of books for young adults.

There are currently six computers available to the public library users, this has proven to be a popular facility with both locals and tourists visiting the community. The library hosted a Summer Reading Challenge for local children. By doing this, they hope to attract more people into the library so that the numbers keep increasing and that Letterfrack Public Library will be an asset to both old and young users.

Summer 2012 Opening Hours:
Tuesday 5:30-7:30;
Wednesday 2:00-4:00;
Thursday 5:30-7:30;
Friday 2:00-4:00;
Saturday 11:00-1:00
The Radio received funding for two series of radio programmes from the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland's Sound & Vision fund.

The West Wind Blows was a series of 52 radio programmes, focusing on poetry, short stories and music. The West Wind Blows received a Crasul Achievement Award for their 8 part series of Lectures for Students who were studying English Leaving Certificate Higher Level. The Lecturers were Denis Creaven and Cathy Sweeney from the Institute of Education and Brendan Flynn, Past Principle of Clifden Community School.

The programmes were presented and produced by Kathleen Faherty with the Technical Assistance of Bridie Cashin.

‘Kids of Connemara Productions’

Connemara Community Radio on the 26th of August 2012 will have successfully broadcast a series of 12 delightful, educational and entertaining half hour radio documentaries called “Beyond the School Gates”.

The series of programmes featured 168 pupils from our 13 National Schools: Leenane, Lettergesh, Eagles Nest, Tully, Letterfrack, Cleggan, Inishbofin, Claddaghduff, Kingstown, Clifden, Ballyconneely, Roundstone, and Cashel. The programmes focused on what pupils learnt about their heritage while on a field trip with renowned Archaeologist Michael Gibbons. Listeners were invited to re-live their local history through these wonderful programmes.

We would like to thank the teachers and schools for their co operation, the landowners for access to their lands and the sites we visited, Michael Gibbons for his amazing ability to share his knowledge of our area in a way that young and old can learn from. To the listeners for your encouraging and positive feedback.

Thanks to the editor of the Ballyconneely programme Patrick Moran. To Linda O’Malley and Mary Owens a very special thank you. Most of all we would like to thank the pupils for their eager and enthusiastic participation.

Gráinne O’Malley was presented with a special award at the Crasul (Community Radio Association of Ireland) Awards ceremony for her “Contribution to Community Radio in Ireland”. Congrats Gráinne.

FETAC LEVEL 4 This year the radio has successfully run 2 FETAC accredited courses. Scoil Pobail Mhic Dara Carna will receive their results in October, and Clifden Community School students received their FETAC Level 4 awards at their end of school year ceremony. A total of ten students received awards at distinction level. Congrats to all GMIT students attended a one day workshop based on Effective Communication Skills. VEC students from The Media Studies programme in Gort attended the station for 2 days practical experience in June.

The following courses hope to be run over the next couple of months.
• Writing for radio in conjunction with Clifden Writers group
• FETAC Level 4 in Community Radio for Transition years and Volunteers Introduction to Community Radio October
• Ongoing volunteer training from beginning to advanced.

The West Wind Blows are running a short story competition open to writers 18 years and over, closing date for entries is 11th October 2012.

Radio Birthday

The Radio birthday was celebrated on Saturday 7th July with a Bar B Que at the Radio, it was very well attended, and a great social get together for all the volunteers. The weather was good and the party went on into the early hours.

The programmes are available to listen to on www.connemara.fm thanks to William Coyne webmaster and will be re broadcast in November and December during our morning programmes. Series Producer Gráinne O’Malley, Assistant Producer Colleen Curran. These programmes have been made with the support of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland.
Tigh na nOg Community Crèche

Tigh na nOg Community Crèche has had a busy year. We have 73 children attending the crèche throughout the week, catering to 60 families in North Connemara. We provide full day-care, pre-school and after-school service. All meals are cooked by staff who are HACCP trained and prepare nutritionally balanced meals.

Our new large outdoor area with Go Play went up in the New Year and is a great hit with the children.

The staff received new uniforms in June and saves on wear and tear on their own clothes. The girls look so well in June and saves on wear and tear on their clothes. The girls look so well in them and the parents were very impressed.

The crèche operates the following schemes – Subvention Scheme (allowing reduced fees for families on lower incomes) Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (free Pre-School Year) and Childcare Education & Training Support Scheme (subsidised Childcare places available to participants who wish to take partake in educational courses run by FAS and Vocational Educational Committees). If you require any further information on the service please call Miriam or Patricia on 095-41908.

**April Fool’s Day Fundraiser**

The parents committee (Eithne O’Halloran, Tania Southwell, Patricia Flaherty, Jody Pollington, Louisa Jack, Sharon Keane & Shona Flaherty) were very busy this year, they raised over €900.00 for their April Fool’s Celebration which consisted of BBQ (thanks to Eddy Byrne), a photo booth, bouncy castle, cake sale, fortune teller, face painting and a mystery leprechaun and bunny!!!

On behalf of myself (Miriam) and Patricia and all the staff in the crèche we wish to thank the parents committee for all their hard work this year and that they deserve a good rest for the summer.

**Kylemore Abbey and Victorian Walled Garden**

For National tree in March some of the pre-schoolers were invited to Kylemore Abbey to plant a tree, this was a great success, from left to right at the back is Tigh na nOg crèche staff, Carrie Graham, Cait Fitzpatrick and Patricia Glynn.

Renvyle Thatched Cottages

We waved goodbye to open fire places at the Cottages last winter and installed stoves. It was a difficult decision to make but one that has proved to be a hit with 99% of guests, especially Aquinas College. Ensuite rooms and larger kitchens are the other requests that may have to be addressed sooner rather than later in order to compete in today’s tourism market.

An up to date sewage system is due to be installed this October, this is a requirement of Galway County Council.

Aquinas College Tullycross celebrate their 40th Anniversary in October 2013 and plans are afoot for a major reunion celebration.

Michael Zagareli who owns Casa Connemara in Tooreena, Renvyle was among the first students to stay at the cottages and as a director of Aquinas College will be helping to organise the event together with Connemara West and past professors of Aquinas College.

40 years on, the cottages continue to be high maintenance especially the thatched roofs the CE scheme is invaluable in maintains a high standard of presentation which is very important to the marketing of the cottages and to the village of Tullycross.

Pride of Place

Galway County Council nominated Letterfrack to represent County Galway in the All Ireland Pride of Place Competition. Unfortunately Letterfrack was piped to the post by Ballyduff Development Group, County Wexford. However, the Letterfrack team put together a great presentation and the weather on the day of the presentation (19th August 2011) was glorious. The people who took part in the presentation were surprised themselves with the range and scale of activities that take place in the local area, so even if Letterfrack didn’t win Pride of Place we could definitely say that we were proud of our place.
Youthreach

Youthreach is a second chance training and education programme for young people between 15-21 years, administered at local level by County Galway Vocational Educational Committee, (VEC), funded by the Department of Education and Skills, with the assistance from the European Social Fund.

The Youthreach centre in Letterfrack is now in its 23rd year and caters for 45 young people from the North West Connemara area. It is a holistic programme, catering for all aspects of the young person, including their physical, intellectual, emotional and psychological needs. The programme is diverse and dynamic; involving students in a variety of certifications, courses, extracurricular activities and fund raising events: widening their horizons and enhancing self-wareness.

The programme offers the following courses:

- A Foundation course for early school leavers, in a variety of Vocational skills.
- Leaving Certificate Applied, a two year programme consisting of three elements of continuous assessment, through projects and tasks; 90% attendance and final examinations.
- Further Education Training Awards Council (FETAC) at levels 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 in a variety of modules including: Art and Design; Social care; Business Studies; Communication, Business Calculations; Woodwork, Furniture Design, Boat Building, Information Technology, Personal Development, Carpentry, Engineering, Childcare, Electronics, Spanish; Horticulture, Metal Craft, Food and Cookery, Mathematics; Communication; and Work Experience.
- E.C.D.L.
- ‘Drive for Life’, which is safe driving course which includes a mock theory test, key driving skills, dos and don’ts on the road, road safety, insurance, information and regulations, a car safety check list and information on the new penalty point system.
- Manual Handling training
- SPHE including a Health and Sexuality module, offering awareness on ‘safe healthy options’; an emotional health awareness module; an ‘Anger Management’ module amongst others.

Childcare provision is offered to young people between 15-21 years, apart from a few photographs in the early years there is no permanent record of the show’s and the individuals who performed. There have been many changes in the group since 1974 and apart from a few photographs in the early years there is no permanent record of the shows and the individuals who participated. The present group has about 20 members with a majority of young musicians, singers and dancers.

The students took part in many extracurricular activities and additional courses throughout the past year including: a Manual Handling; ‘Safe Pass’ and Kayaking, level 1 courses; The Western Regional Youthreach Castlebar ‘Sports Day’; the ‘Pure Skills’ challenge; ‘Go Karting’; the Galway Aquarium; an in-house ‘Pool’ Competition; students also attended a number of cultural events including ‘Macbeth’ in the Galway Town Hall Theatre and a play on ‘Immigration’ in the Renule Teach Ceoil, Community Arts Centre.

The Youthreach Christmas choir entertained residents of Cluid Housing Association; St. Anne’s Nursing home, Clifden Hospital, and visited the participants of Criost Linn, in sharing their well rehearsed collection of Christmas Carols. Students were heartily welcomed by all and they enjoyed the festive activities.

The students took part in a number of fund raising events during the Year, raising over €1000.00 for Cancer Care West by completing a sponsored Climb of Croagh Patrick in January 2012. The L.C.A classes organised a number of ‘Coffee morning’ in support ‘Western Alzheimer Services’ and the Clifden RNLI. The Youthreach students and staff operated a Craft Market stall as part of Clifden Town 200 years Celebrations, with the proceeds of over €700.00 going to ‘1st Line’ a suicide helpline service.

The annual Letterfrack Youthreach ‘Open Day’, Confering of certificates and Exhibition of students’ work was held in June 2012 in Ellis Hall. The ‘Open Day’ is an important event in the centre’s Youthreach calendar, celebrating students’ achievements.

The centre is offering a new G.A.P. (Get Ahead Progression) programme in September 2012 offering boat building, outdoor pursuits, art and design and social care FETAC modules.

For further information on Youthreach any of the above courses contact:
Theresa McLaughlin @ 095 41893
Email: tmcloughlin@cogalvec.ie
WEB: www.youthreachletterfrack.com

Teach Ceoil

Highlight of the past year was the launch of the new DVD Seisiún in the Teach Ceoil, which was filmed during the course of the 2011 Summer Seisiún programme.

The purpose of the DVD was to have a record of the show and the artistes who performed. There have been many changes in the group since 1974 and apart from a few photographs in the early years there is no permanent record of the shows and the individuals who participated. The present group has about 20 members with a majority of young musicians,ingers and dancers.

It will be interesting to look back on the DVD in years to come to see many who will by then be established performers.

The Master Classes
The Music Master Classes continued in the Teach Ceoil during the past year with teachers Marie Walsh, Liz Kane and Noreen O’Sullivan delivering the classes. Some great new talent is coming to the fore and will in future years take their places in the Seisiún.

Group Scholarships to the Scoil Éigse at the All-Ireland Fleadh Cheoil in Cavan were once again awarded and those who attended benefitted greatly and had a wonderful week in Cavan.

A weekend workshop and a big music session in the Renule Inn were organised in November last and included Maura Walsh, Kerry, (Concertina), Daithi Gormley, Sligo (Accordion); John Mchugh, Foxford, (Fiddle) and Noreen O’Sullivan, Carna, (Tin Whistle). Class numbers participated with great success in the Grupai Cheoil, Céilí Bands and in individual competitions at the Galway, County Fleadh in Clifden in May 2012. Our thanks to the Forum Connemara Leader Programme for their help in running the Master classes in the Teach Ceoil and in the production of the DVD.
Conservation|Letterfrack

Clongowes Wood Castle
In 2008, Conservation|Letterfrack successfully completed the conservation and restoration of the windows in the People’s Church in Clongowes Wood College in Clane. In 2012, CJL were awarded the contract to restore all of the windows in the Castle. The windows had to be restored during the summer period and due to the considerable size of the project CJL was able to employ additional staff for the project.

National Trust (NI)
The Arrow is a 25 foot (7.6 m) single four oar rowing skiff which was stored in the National Trust Storage facility near the Giant’s Causeway Visitor Centre near Bushmills. It was decided to move the boat to a safer and more accessible place in the educational room of the NT Centre. To ensure the full usage of the training room a special suspension method was developed with a cradle and straps to suspend the boat from the ceiling and to ensure full accessibility to the boat in a safe manner. The boat can be lowered through a winch.

However, the first job was to surface cleaning of the boat to remove the dust and dirt which had accumulated over the years. The team used vacuum cleaners and long haired brushes to remove the loose surface debris and then conducted with a shorter stiffer brush to move finer and more embedded dust. After testing, a wet clean was then required to remove the last very fine surface dust using a cleaning solution of water and a Vulpex solution of 5% v/v in deionised water.

National Print Museum
The National Print Museum collects, documents, preserves, exhibits, interprets and makes accessible the material evidence of printing craft and fosters associated skills of the craft in Ireland. The National Print Museum commissioned Conservation|Letterfrack to re-organise and optimise its main storage facility which houses a wide selection of materials and printing presses in a secure warehouse. As part of the re-organisation of the storage facility all of the printing presses were cleaned and a corrosion inhibiting protective coating was applied.

Heritage Day
Conservation|Letterfrack held their 8th open day on Sunday 26th August and were delighted to welcome visitors to the workshop (both local and those that had travelled some distances) to view heritage objects and furniture. It gave visitors a chance to get advice on the care of their furniture or wooden objects. Heritage Day has become a popular feature of Conservation|Letterfrack’s annual calendar and is normally held on the last Sunday in August.

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