

COINNIEMARA WEST

ANNUAL REPORT 2015 / 2016



Connemara West AGM will be held in Ellis Hall, Letterfrack
on Wednesday 28th September at 8pm

Connemara West

Connemara West plc is a community owned and managed rural development company based in Letterfrack in North West Connemara. It was established in 1971 to promote the social, economic and cultural development of the area. We have come a long way since 1971.

For contact & information:

Phone: 095-41047
Email: reception@connemara-west.net
Website: www.connemarawest.ie
Facebook: Connemara West plc

Connemara West
Connemara West Centre
Letterfrack,
Co. Galway H91 AH5K

Connemara West Directors and Staff

Directors

Kevin Heanue	<i>Chairman</i>
Kathleen Kane	<i>Secretary</i>
Jenny Conboy	Gerard Coyne
Cathy Keane	Paddy Kane
Padraic Lyden	Patrick Sammon
Paddy Walsh	Mary Gannon

Advisors to the Board

Ann Pollington	Breda Coneys
Michael O'Neill	Janet O'Toole

Connemara West - Full Time Staff

Ann Pollington	<i>Accounts</i>
Bridget Lydon	<i>Reception/Admin</i>
Paddy Kane	<i>CE Supervisor</i>
Malachy Higgins	<i>Librarian - GMIT</i>

Part Time & Occasional

Michael O'Neill	<i>Head of Education, Training & Development</i>
Breda Coneys	<i>Development Worker</i>
Janet O'Toole	<i>Administration</i>
Anne Jack	<i>Cottages Supervisor</i>
Brid Staunton	<i>Accounts</i>
Carol Cronnelly	<i>Temp Reception & Exhibition Supervisor</i>
Geraldine Heanue	<i>Exhibition Supervisor</i>

Other Connemara West Staff in Centre

Peter Coyne	<i>Craft Assistant - GMIT</i>
Shemeem O'Toole	<i>Assistant Admin GMIT</i>
Joe Mortimer	<i>Caretaker - CWest & GMIT</i>

Aquinas College Interns - Jan-Apr 2016

Corey Willette
Meredith Tomich
McKenzie L Rumley

Conservation | Letterfrack - Full Time Staff

Sven Habermann	<i>Manager</i>
Simon Brown	<i>Senior Conservator/Restorer</i>
Thomas Flaherty	<i>Conservator/Restorer</i>
Kate Aughey	<i>Conservator/Restorer</i>

Part Time & Occasional

Janet O'Toole	<i>Administration</i>
Phillippe Homburger	<i>Upholsterer</i>
Christine Schubert	<i>Intern - Oct 2015-Mar 2016</i>
Jens Kosak	<i>Cabinetmaker</i>
David Cosgrove	<i>Cabinetmaker</i>
Ray Griffin	<i>Cabinetmaker</i>
Tony Cording	<i>Carpenter</i>

Crèche Staff

Caroline Heanue	<i>Manager</i>
Patricia Glynn	<i>Deputy Manager</i>
Geraldine Walsh	<i>Food Handler</i>
Siobhan O'Neill	
Amanda Kearney	
Aisling Joyce	
Leigh Birchmore	
Mary Walsh	
Grainne Coyne	
Carrie Graham	
Carmel Walsh	
Annabella Lydon	
Anita Aya	
Rosemary Mongan	

Share Transfers

If you have any queries about shares or would like to transfer shares please do not hesitate to contact Janet on 095 41047 and she will be happy to assist you. We have had a steady flow of requests for share transfers over the past few years. The Board of Connemara West are delighted with the continued interest shown by people in the company and the transfer of shares continues to bring new shareholders into the company which will prove vital support for Connemara West in the future.



Renvyle Thatched Cottages

Built in 1973, these 9 thatched cottages in the village of Tullycross are rented to traditional tourists and are also home to students and Professors from US colleges who base their study abroad programmes in Tullycross.



Teach Ceoil

Established in 1977, the Teach Ceoil in Tully village is a centre for Irish culture particularly traditional music, song and dance, which hosts the Seisiún in the summer and music, song and dance classes throughout the year.



Office Services

Since 1980, Connemara West has provided a range of office services to the public such as colour printing up to and including A3; photocopying; faxing; ring/slide binding; laminating; e-mailing; scanning.



GMIT Letterfrack

Since 1987, Connemara West plc has partnered with GMIT Letterfrack to deliver honours degree programmes specialising in Furniture Design and Manufacture; Furniture and Wood Technology; Teacher Education. GMIT Letterfrack is the National Centre of Excellence for Furniture Design and Wood Technology.



Conservation | Letterfrack

Established in 1999, this is a workshop which provides a conservation and restoration service throughout Ireland, to the highest international standards for furniture, wooden artefacts and architectural woodwork.



Tigh na nOg Community Crèche

Built in 2006, this community crèche offers a range of childcare services to the catchment area of North West Connemara.



Development partnerships with other local and non-local organisations

Throughout the past decades, Connemara West plc has also partnered with many other organisations to provide social housing; community services; sports facilities; community radio; adult and continuing education; and rural development and social inclusion programme delivery to the people of North West Connemara.

Renvyle Thatched Cottages

The cottages were busy again this year. Traditional tourists continue to fill the cottages at the height of the tourist season. During the rest of the year, five American colleges - Aquinas College, Maine Maritime College, Kirkwood Community College, Lourdes University and St. Louis University - brought students and Professors to Tullycross. The colleges use the cottages as a base for their Ireland Study Abroad programmes. Late in 2016, New Hampshire Technical Institute will bring students to Tullycross for the first time, and in 2017, New England College is another new college visiting the village. When St. Louis University were in Tullycross in summer 2016 they also visited the US Ambassador to Ireland in Dublin. Ambassador Kevin O'Malley is a graduate of St. Louis University.



US Ambassador Kevin O'Malley being presented with gifts from Connemara West

This growth in the number US colleges and students coming to Tullycross is part of Connemara West's education-led development strategy. As a result, the region of Letterfrack, Tullycross and the Renvyle peninsula is rapidly gaining a reputation as the destination of choice for colleges and Universities from the United States wishing to bring students and Professors to rural Ireland for a learning and cultural experience.

Over the past 5 years, the number of US students coming to Tullycross has increased three-fold, making a significant economic, social and cultural contribution to the area.

The US colleges stay in the cottages for periods ranging from a semester to one week to study Irish history, literature and culture and, facilitated by Connemara West, take up internships with local organisations; engage in community-focused research and scholarship with Irish academics and community members and get involved in service learning activities in the Tullycross area.

In addition to study abroad programmes coming to Tullycross, Connemara West is also encouraging other education-based visits to the area. For example, in mid-June 2016, personnel from Aquinas College, Lourdes University and Kirkwood Community College attended a micro conference called 'Interchanges' in Renvyle House Hotel, which was held in conjunction with Connemara West. In addition to the US participants, people from GMIT Letterfrack, Teagasc, The Cope Foundation and Connemara West presented at the conference. Participants at the conference stayed in the cottages. This is the second year the conference was held and it is growing from strength to strength. It will take place again in 2017.



Irish and US participants at the recent Interchanges micro conference in Renvyle House Hotel

International Education Centre



An artist's impression of the planned Education Centre

In order to service this new education-led demand, Connemara West has obtained planning permission for a major refurbishment and renovation of the nine thatched cottages in Tullycross. When renovated, the cottages will be able to accommodate 40 people. In addition, in June 2016, we received planning permission to build a new education centre in Tullycross which will contain a 50-seat auditorium; a wifi-enabled learning hub/library; group study/breakout rooms; video conferencing facilities; conference room and a coffee dock.

The education centre will have multiple uses. In addition to being a teaching base for the study abroad programmes for US colleges, it will also function as a dissertation completion retreat for US graduate students; US college faculty professional development centre; lead venue for a summer school on Resilience and Sustainability; venue for online delivery and certification of courses from US colleges to the local, regional and national Irish communities; administrative and promotional centre for Fellowships for Irish residents to the US colleges who use the centre and a centre for comparative research on rural community leadership and engagement.

The centre will also be a venue for community meeting rooms, training and events.

A group called the 'Friends of Connemara' have been established in Grand Rapids, Michigan to help support the development of the cottages and the education centre. The group visited Tullycross in August 2016 for a week in order to get a better understanding of how they can help Connemara West press ahead with the plans.



The 'Friends of Connemara' group with members of the community

There will be a launch of the plans for the cottages and education centre in Tullycross in early 2017.

Conservation | Letterfrack

Conservation | Letterfrack continues to attract a range of interesting objects to the workshop for conservation and restoration, to work with museums on mounting and displaying objects and also larger interior projects.

Castletown House

Conservation | Letterfrack continue to work in Castletown House and carried out a survey of all the furniture and related objects in the house.



A George III decorative musical clock, made by Charles Clay of London on display in the Green Drawing Room in Castletown House.

Irish National War Memorial Gardens

The War Memorial garden in Islandbridge is one of the most famous memorial gardens in Europe, these gardens are dedicated to the memory of 49,400 Irish soldiers who died in the First World War.

Conservation | Letterfrack were commissioned to upgrade and remount all the exhibitions for the state ceremony on the 9th July 2016 to mark centenary of the Battle of the Somme.

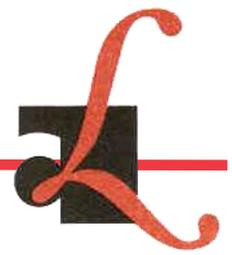


Exhibits from the National War Memorial Gardens

National Gallery of Ireland

Conservation | Letterfrack reinstalled the carved door frames in the Milltown Wing of the National Gallery in Spring 2016. The frames were carved by Carlo Gambi in Sienna, Italy.





Conservation | Letterfrack were commissioned to restore the windows in two historic buildings in the past year.

St Thomas' Church, Moyard



Conservation of the windows of St Thomas' Church which retains most of its historic fabric. The windows have a simple design with attention being drawn especially to the south-east window with its timber tracery and the rose window. The church was built with the support of two local landlords, Thomas Butler of Crocnaraw and Thomas Prior of Ross. The first rector was Rev. Thomas de Vere Coneys, a Professor of Irish in Trinity College, Dublin



St Thomas' Church, Moyard

Dower House, Westport Credit Union

Conservation of the windows of the "Dower House" on the North Mall in Westport for the Westport Credit Union. Built in the early 19th Century for the Dowager on the marriage of her son, The Marquis of Sligo, the building was used as the Bank of Ireland from 1851 until 2007.



Dower House, Westport Credit Union

Heritage Day

Conservation | Letterfrack hosted the 11th open day for Heritage week on the 28th of August 2016. This has become a popular feature of our annual calendar and we were delighted to welcome visitors from all over Ireland and abroad.

Visitors have the chance to view a range of heritage objects and furniture and also to get advice on the care of the furniture and even try their hand at woodturning or other traditional skills.



Woodturning during Heritage Day 2016

GMIT Letterfrack hosted a one-day conference on Friday, 30 October 2015 as part of Irish Design 2015 (ID15), a national year-long programme promoting and celebrating Irish Design in every form, titled *Déanta: Irish Design from Concept to Manufacture to Market*. Keynote speakers at the event were award-winning Irish designer's/design consultants Peter Sheehan of Peter Sheehan Studio, Seán Mc Nulty, MDat Dolmen.

GMIT Letterfrack hosted a very successful Careers Day on Thursday 15th October with Irish and international employers lining up to meet students, graduates and staff. Employers such as MJM Group, Ganter Interior GmbH, Woodcom, Galtee Wood and Veneer, and Andrew Ryan Traditional and Modern Furniture gave presentations to students throughout the day outlining opportunities for recruitment and work placements as well as trends in the furniture and wood products industries in Ireland and overseas.



In November, GMIT Letterfrack undertook an exciting public initiative, with support from Irish Design 2015, which has seen seven large display boxes put on permanent public

exhibition in prominent locations around Galway City to promote Irish Design. The initiative, called '*Galway Design Box*', will see each box house an Irish designer's work on a rotating basis for a period of four months. The concept and design, were the brainchild of GMIT Letterfrack design lecturers Davin Larkin and Jeremy Madden and were made in Letterfrack by Conservation | Letterfrack.



2nd Year FWT students with President Michael D. Higgins

Cian Mulligan from Rathcoole, Co. Dublin, a third year student studying on the B.Sc. (Hons) in Furniture and Wood Technology programme won his second top award in the 2016 IrelandSkills National Competitions in April, 2016. Cian won the IrelandSkills National Competition in Cabinetmaking held in Dun Laoghaire Further Education Institute. We congratulate Cian on this fantastic achievement and also commend Matthew Howard, Sean Hogan and John Hewer for their excellent performance. Last December Cian also won the 2016 IrelandSkills National Competition in Joinery, held in CIT.

The GMIT Letterfrack Hurling team represented their college in an exemplary way at



the Maher Cup All Ireland finals weekend in Cork IT. Letterfrack beat Marino Institute in the semi-final on Friday 26th February and unfortunately lost out to Sligo IT in the final the following day. Big congratulations must go to every member of the panel and their management; their attitude and behaviour all weekend, both on and off the field was nothing short of excellent. They are great ambassadors for Letterfrack and GMIT. Well done to all involved and best of luck next year.

The Teach Ceoil

Opened in 1974 the Teach Ceoil is this year celebrating the 40th anniversary of its Summer season programme Seisiún.

In 1974 there were nine members in the group, all over twenty years of age. In 2016 there were 15 members in the group and 8 were under the age of 20 which is a good indicator of the popularity of Irish traditional music, song and dance among young people in the Ireland of today. This is particularly noticeable at the All Ireland Fleadh Cheoil where the standard of musicianship among young musicians is at an all-time high.



Katie Nee, Caoimhe Ni Fhlatharta, Caroline and Loretta Coyne



Caoimhe Ni Fhlatharta, Luke Gannon and Rian Sheridan with a guest performing in the second half of the show.

This year's Seisiún programme contained a theme "Dawn of a Nation" which commemorated the 1916 Rising. Audience reaction was superb and the "House Full" sign was up on five of the seven performances with many having to be turned away.

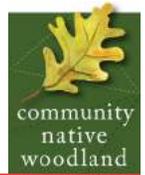
Approximately 110 musicians, singers and dancers have taken part as members of the group during the past 40 years with some, sadly, having passed on to their eternal reward. The policy of introducing new young members into the group continues and this year three young musicians had their first experience of the stage and the bright lights. They were all fiddle players - Caroline Coyne, Caoimhe Flaherty and Katie Nee, and if they continue playing they should all have bright musical futures ahead.



Nathan Pilatzke watched by fellow dancers Steven Coohill and Caitlin Salmon and guests.

At present a feasibility study to examine the possibility of catering for a wider Community Arts Programme in the Teach Ceoil is underway. The study will also examine the feasibility of installing retractable tiered seating which would allow patrons seated at the back of the audience to have a clear view of the stage. A traditional music evening to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the opening of the Teach Ceoil is being planned for later in the year.

GMIT Green Campus



Green Campus GMIT Letterfrack with Connemara National Park (NPWS) were proud to have Duncan Stewart officially open the Community Native Woodland in the Connemara National Park in September.

The new five-acre native woodland was established by the Green Campus in the grounds of the Connemara National Park (CNP) in collaboration with the CNP, Connemara West and local community groups. The new Community Native Woodland is comprised of over 3,000 saplings which were planted by GMIT Letterfrack students as well as staff in the three organisations and community groups. The project was first planned in 2013 by the GMIT Letterfrack Green Campus Committee with support from the 'One Million Trees and a Day' initiative and a Department of Agriculture Native Woodland grant. The species planted include alder, birch, whitethorn, guilder rose, holly, pendunculate oak and scots pine.

The launch was very well attended by all the educational institutions in Letterfrack, Connemara National Park, Connemara West, Letterfrack Tidy Towns and members of the local community.

In 2016, the Green Campus hosted a 1916 Commemorative Tree Planting in the Community



Native Woodland and were joined again by Students and Staff from GRETB – Further Education Centre and Youthreach, Letterfrack N.S., Virginia Tech and Aquinas College. Other events organised by the Green Campus were a Big Spring Clean in April with the Further Education Centre, Youthreach and they also organised a Household Hazardous Waste info event with Letterfrack Tidy Towns and Galway County Council. The team are currently working on the development of a Community Native Woodland APP and other educational resources to highlight the value and importance of native woodlands which can be used by students and visitors.



Dermot O'Dovovan, Duncan Stewart and Janet O'Toole

Diamond Hill Housing Association & Foscadh Community Development



In the late 1990's Diamond Hill Housing Association and Foscadh Community Development were set up by Connemara West, Tullycross Credit Union and Forum Connemara to receive 12 acres of land in Letterfrack from St. Jarlath's Diocesan Trust, Tuam. The land in question was not suitable for development and it was decided to enter into negotiations with Connemara National Park with the object of exchanging the St. Jarlath's Diocesan Trust land for a similar area of National Park land more suitable for development. The negotiations with both parties dragged on for eight years and eventually agreement was reached and the exchange took place. To date two pitches have been developed, one a full size Gaelic pitch and the other a floodlit 60 meters by 35 meters Astro Turf training pitch. A section of the land was sold on to Clúid Housing Agency and a wonderful new Social Housing Scheme of thirteen units has been completed and are now occupied. Phase Two of the housing development is currently being planned and will add a further ten or eleven units.



Clúid Social Housing Scheme

All attention is now focused on the much talked about and long awaited Community Services and Leisure Centre. This project has been redesigned for the fourth time and planning permission has been obtained. The ground works, which will entail the removal of 6,000 cubic metres of bog and the importation of fill, have been put out to Tender and a contractor appointed. Grant applications are currently being prepared and once an adequate budget is in place it should be all systems go. Meanwhile the two pitches are in full use and it is very encouraging to see such a high level of involvement by so many voluntary workers who are to be congratulated. The winning post is in sight so we must all redouble our efforts to finally get across the finish line.



Community Sports Field, Letterfrack



Primary School Blitz

Youthreach



Youthreach Letterfrack was established in 1990 after a successful Youth Skills course and has served the community as an educational centre for young people between the ages of 16 and 21 since. The anchor of the centre and its first Co-Ordinator, Theresa McLoughlin retired in September 2015. The work she did establishing and building Youthreach locally and nationally is second to none. On behalf of students, past and present, I would like to thank her for all the hard work and time she has given to every student whom she mentored. I think that each of those students will be forever grateful for the help they received while in Youthreach and for many years after they left. As the new Co-Ordinator I aim to continue Theresa's great work and I aspire to give the same genuine rapport, care and support that she has given throughout her many years as Coordinator.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remember a former colleague and a great mentor to many students who passed away last year, Johnny Mortimer. I have spoken with many students about Johnny and they will never forget his kind nature and the many skills he taught them while in Youthreach. He is lovingly remembered by all.



Woodwork

This year Youthreach Letterfrack is offering the Leaving Cert Applied. It is two year programme that is available to students who wish to follow a practical Leaving Certificate programme with a vocational focus. Smaller class sizes and a practical emphasis means that the students can create beautiful pieces of work.

We also offer QQI accredited modules in various subjects at different levels to suit the learning needs of the students.

QQI accredited modules in Communications, Work Experience, Career Planning, Design, Small Wooden Boat Building, Home repairs and Maintenance, Children with additional needs, Culinary techniques, Team working, Growing vegetables and many more.

Last year we were delighted to get a tour of some local businesses such as Jack and Eddie's Pig Farm and McGraths Quarry. Trips outside the Centre can create a new learning experience that cannot be replicated in the classroom and we are very grateful to those who opened their doors to show us their working life.

If anyone would like to find out more about the centre or the programmes on offer call me Yvonne Donohoe on 095-41893 or drop in and visit.



Metalwork

Tigh na nOg Community Crèche

In April of this year we said a tearful goodbye to Miriam Culhane-Lee, who was manager here since we opened in 2008. We thank her for all her hard work, dedication and friendship while she was here and wish her well in the future. Caroline Heanue has replaced Miriam as Manager. Caroline has worked in childcare settings for the past 14 years including a period in Tigh na nOg. She holds a Childcare Level 6 Certificate and is currently studying for a degree in Business, Enterprise & Community Development.

Nine children leave our ECCE room this year to start school. We had a great day out in Loughwell Farm before they left. We wish them every success; it was our pleasure to be part of their lives. They also enjoyed a performance by Ros and Sean Coyne, Curlew Theatre. The children loved trying on all the different masks.



Tigh na nOg Community Crèche



Miriam Culhane-Lee and Caroline Heanue

Our garden continues to do well, the children were delighted to bring lettuce and radishes home with them. We have peas, carrots, spinach, flowers and fruit growing at the moment and are looking forward to a good harvest. The children also enjoy nature walks in the National Park and of course the playground is always a big hit. Our projects at the moment include a mud garden, a fairy garden and upcycling old materials into something new.



Crèche Garden

Our service includes full time, part time, preschool, free year and afterschool's. All our staff are qualified and update their training regularly. We have places available at the moment, if you are interested in sending your child contact Caroline on 41908/0877004926 or email caroline.heanue@outlook.ie.

Connemara Community Radio



21st Birthday

Connemara Community Radio celebrated their 21st birthday in July with a day-long broadcast from all over Connemara followed by a tea-dance and bar-b-que. CCR would like to thank everyone who participated in the day and to all our friends, listeners, advertisers and sponsors for the overwhelming number of good wishes and support received for their birthday.

CFI

Connemara Community Radio took part in a CRAOL (Community Radio Association of Ireland) and CFI (Community Foundation of Ireland) initiative "Speaking up for Change" and produced an hour long programme advocating for older people. These programmes were broadcast nationwide with an audience of over 250,000. Thanks to all those who participated.

Awards

Connemara Community Radio won 2 awards this year at the CRAOL Achievements Awards presented at the annual CRAOL Feile. We were delighted with this as it's a national acknowledgement of our programming. The two programmes were "Strength of Silence" produced and presented by Nadia Genet and Steven Ward and Pat Coyne and "Darkness to Light" produced by a group of Clifden Community School Transition Year students - Maurice Joyce, PJ Nee, Aaron O Donoghue, Maurice Prendergast, Rory Conneely.



Connemara Community Radio staff with President Michael D. Higgins at Aras an Uachtarain

Meeting President Michael D. Higgins

On Thursday 17th September President Higgins hosted a reception for the board and volunteers of CRAOL, the Community Radio Forum, at Aras an Uachtarain. In attendance from Connemara Community Radio were Gráinne O'Malley, Colleen Curran, Brendan Ridge, Kathleen Faherty and Eamonn McLouglin. Pictured here with President Higgins, the CCR delegation enjoyed afternoon tea and a chat with the President, who also gave a speech on the beginnings and development of CRAOL over the last 20 years.



Sadly, one of our valued and much loved volunteers, Jack Tomlinson passed away during the year. He is missed by all. RIP Jack.



Volunteers

Volunteers are the backbone of CCR and Connemara Community Radio is lucky to have over 100 enthusiastic volunteers. For those who would like to learn more about community radio, CCR in conjunction with GRETB will deliver an Introduction to Radio a practical course. This course will be very practical and is open to the public and current volunteers. The course starts in October and for more details contact Connemara Community Radio. Connemara Community Radio also provide QQI accredited courses. QQI 3 in Media Expression, QQI 4 Community Radio & QQI 4 Communications. New volunteers are always welcome and training is provided. CCR are currently looking for a volunteer or volunteers who would be interested in presenting an Irish Language or bi-lingual programme as well as telephonists, researchers, technicians and presenters for other programmes. Have you an idea for a radio programme ???? just call in to us in Letterfrack or call us on 095 41616 and we will be delighted to help you develop your idea.

Marketing

Connemara Community Radio revamped their old logo last July and are busy with revitalising their website. Polo and T-shirts were also designed and are now on sale at the station.

Membership

Support your radio station by becoming a member. Membership costs just €25 per annum and this income is much needed revenue for the radio.



Dermot O'Donovan, Michael O'Neill and Fergal Barry

In November 2015, Michael O'Neill was presented with an Honorary Fellowship by GMIT President Dr Fergal Barry at the GMIT Conferring Ceremonies in Galway. Michael O'Neill, one of the founding Directors and first company secretary of Connemara West, has an unparalleled record and legacy in community activism. He has held the position of Secretary of Muintir na Tíre Community Council, Chairman of the Galway County Federation of Community Councils, Founding Director and Treasurer of Tullycross Credit Union, Founding Director & Secretary of Connemara West plc, and Director of Kilkenny Design Workshops, as well as being an elected Member of Galway County Council from 1991 to 1998. Dermot O'Donovan paid tribute to Michael O'Neill, saying: "Michael has worked tirelessly and selflessly to promote the sustainable development of the North West Connemara area".



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