

A Vision for Ferns

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Challenging Times

We are living in a challenging time for everyone. While many people and businesses are negatively impacted by the Coronavirus, there are also many examples of the community pulling together in a time of adversity. The level of engagement by groups and individuals within our community is impressive. From the organised volunteers delivering to homes, to

frontline workers and many individuals helping out in small and meaningful ways. It is a time to look out for each other and keep in touch. The small acts of kindness matter now more than ever – working together makes it easier to get through. Each of us is experiencing the pandemic in different ways and we hope that as a community the resilience we are building up now will help us

shape our future and create a new, optimistic normal.

There are a number of exciting projects going on in Ferns at the moment and we would welcome your involvement. Little will be achieved and progress slow unless we have the support of our community.



Looking to the future

While Ferns is a place of great history and has a great community spirit - we also have a significant number of challenges and an untapped potential. Up to now it has been difficult to get sufficient funding to progress village development. In recent years this has begun to change.



Being Prepared

The experience of communities that have been successful in attracting funding for development has been that a number of things need to be in place:

- A plan for development
- A range of individual projects ready to take advantage of funds when they become available
- Local funding—all projects require a local contribution.

- A strong community organisation uniting the efforts of community and all its organisations.

All funding opportunities are competitive, and in the same way as our sports teams put huge preparation in before they compete, our community needs to be prepared and ready. For this to happen we need people to get involved and to support the efforts to make Ferns a better place to live, work and visit.

Ferns Development Association

Ferns Development Association (FDA) is a voluntary community development group which represents the interests of the people of Ferns and its hinterland, liaising with state agencies and other relevant bodies. It has 4 sub-groups:

1. **Ferns Tidy Towns:** Tidy Towns projects—village enhancement.
2. **Ferns Community Alert**— providing alarms for older people
3. **Ferns Bfriendly**—a

pilot project established to give phone support to people experiencing isolation.

4. **Ferns Heritage Project** — Tourism development with a focus on the medieval story.

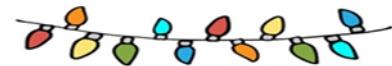
In 2018 FDA, in association with Ferns Community Centre (FCC), applied for a Town & Village Renewal Scheme grant. Ferns Community Centre is run by a voluntary committee which manages and maintains

the Centre. The community centre works closely with FDA to maximise the potential for developments in the community.

Both FDA & FCC are seeking to establish companies limited by guarantee. This will ensure governance compliance and protect the personal interests of volunteers involved.



Christmas Lights



Each year Christmas lights are put up on Main St bringing light and a sense of welcome to those living in and visiting Ferns. The cost of replacing bulbs and maintenance was high as the lights were quite old. An annual table quiz covers the cost of putting them up and replacing parts. Last December FDA bought a new more energy efficient LED system as the old lights were in poor condition and not fit for purpose. The total cost of this project was €14,000

Taking a strategic approach to developing our potential

Rediscovering Ancient Connections—The Saints is another project which will benefit Ferns. It is an INTERREG funded project administered by Wexford County Council. The project was inspired by the relationship between St. Aidan and St. David and its aim is to revive links between Ferns and St. Davids in Wales.

Town & Village Renewal Scheme for Ferns

In 2018, FDA and FCC were awarded a grant of €99,000 under the Town & Village Renewal Scheme.

Project costs were €124,000— a grant of €99,000 was awarded, with a match funding requirement of 10% and voluntary labour at 10% from our end.

Tourism is seen as a key contributor to the Irish

economy and to rural communities.

Ferns is well placed to make the best of our resources. It has two key assets: its people and its significant medieval story. Known as the Ancient Capital of Leinster—stories and events connected with Ferns changed the course of Irish history. The Town & Village Renewal Scheme projects were devised to

develop the potential of our assets.

The following elements were approved:

1. Medieval Themed Playground
2. Interpretative Exhibition
3. Tourism Development Plan
4. Website Upgrade
5. Video and Radio Production Workshops.



1. Medieval Themed Playground

The playground, with a medieval theme, is located on the green space behind Ferns Community Centre. It is a visual reminder of Ferns as the seat of power of the Kings of Leinster. The playground was built to the highest standards and was awarded ROSPA certification as it complies with their safety standards.

Up to now it has been enjoyed by local children and we look forward to it also becoming an attraction for visiting families.

The playground is currently closed due to COVID-19 restrictions. However damage done to the facility before

closure raises issues for our community.



2. Interpretative exhibition



Located in Ferns Community Centre, the exhibition is designed to facilitate continued use by other users i.e. weekly bingo. Currently

under construction offsite, the exhibition will focus on telling the story of Ferns from the time of St. Aidan in the 6th century, through Gaelic kingship and the arrival of the Normans. The aim is to tell the story in an animated, engaging way and should be of interest to the seasoned historian and to those with a passing interest in history. Stories of power and intrigue, of saints, Gaelic kings and Norman knights abound in the Ancient Capital of Leinster.

The complex history of Ferns goes beyond the historic elements - in many ways a real Game of Thrones. A tourist information point in the exhibition area will ensure that visitors are welcomed and pointed to sites of interest in Ferns including the iconic Ferns Castle .

Plans to open in July have been postponed due to COVID -19 restrictions. Updates will be given on the Ferns Village website and social media.

3. Tourism Development Plan

The Plan is currently at the final stages of preparation. The brief for the Plan was to work with a representative number of local businesses, groups and individuals to devise a strategic approach to developing a year round tourism offering in Ferns. Using a model of social enterprise, a number of initiatives were looked

at—practical initiatives such as reviving Ferns’ music tradition and the making of crafts. The Plan covers a 5 year period and includes short term and long term goals such as the possibility of developing a community café. The Plan builds on existing tourism initiatives and makes recommendations for

development in a number of areas of interest to our community.



4. Website Upgrade

4. Website: The fernsvillage.ie website has been upgraded to include new features and a more vibrant look and feel. We would appreciate if you could visit and give feedback. We are in the process of updating the business and voluntary group sections.

To add your business or group to the Ferns Village website, just click on the link “Add a Listing” to the bottom of our webpage, fernsvillage.ie, and provide us with your details.



www.fernsvillage.ie

5. Video & Radio Productions

5. Video & Radio Production

Workshops: Tutors with expertise in the field of video and radio production ran workshops in Ferns over a 5 day period in July 2019. The workshops were free and open to teenagers from 13 to 17 yrs. Participants produced videos and a podcast which can be viewed on <https://bit.ly/2Y8M4JL>



Ferns Development Association

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FernsVillage



@FernsVillage



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Ferns Village YouTube channel

As COVID-19 restrictions lessen, there are still many people in need of support and we are fortunate to have a number of voluntary services delivering groceries and medicines. If you would like to avail of these services please ring: Ferns Bfriendly & Ferns Community First Responders (both Garda vetted) 087-2327902 and 086-8145217 and Ferns GAA 087-9658235 and 087-97514737. For ‘Meals on Wheels’ queries, ring 087-2661571.

Thanks to all who have helped in any way during this crisis.

As businesses re-open after a long period of closure, we wish them well and ask that people shop local when possible.

A dedicated community support call centre has been established by Wexford County Council to assist at-risk members of the public in accessing non-emergency and non-medical supports and advice during the current public health emergency. Ph: 053-9196000 (9am—5pm)

#staywell #supporteachother #shoplocal