

FERNS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

Community Projects Update

Progress continues on a number of projects and we remain optimistic for delivering a community vision for Ferns. This Newsletter will give an update on projects and activities undertaken by Ferns Community Development Association (FCDA) over the past few years.

Online Family Quiz - Thursday March 18th. at 8pm.

This quiz will be a little different to our last online quiz. This time we are raising the entertainment bar by showcasing local talent, with Stacey Breen, the well known young singer, performing at interval time. This is our first springtime quiz and our main aim is to provide light relief and entertainment during COVID restrictions and also to raise much needed funds – it is important that participants enjoy the experience while supporting local projects.

For the quiz, we will follow our previous model which was a great success. This time round, we're reducing ticket price from €20 to €15 per household - information on registration and payment are

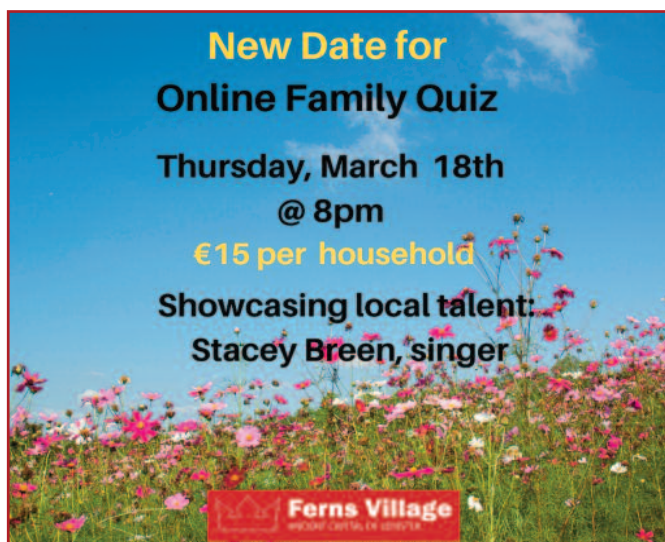
available on www.fernsvillage.ie.

Thanks to Paul Doyle, Quiz Master and Lee Bergin, Ferns Communications, who is looking after live streaming. For enquires please email:


secretaryfcda@fernsvillage.ie.

Christmas Lights

In December 2020 we bought a metal Christmas tree and lights which will sit annually in a prominent



**New Date for
Online Family Quiz**
Thursday, March 18th
@ 8pm
€15 per household
Showcasing local talent:
Stacey Breen, singer



position by the roundabout, a shining light to all around – the tree was made locally by John Byrne and erected by Tom Morrissey which fits with our policy of sourcing goods, skills and labour locally when we can. Thanks to Wexford County Council for the grant which funded the purchase of the tree and lights.

In 2019 we bought new energy efficient string lights for €13,800, replacing the older lights which were costly to run and maintain. Funding for these lights is sourced through our annual Christmas Table Quiz. Last December, we ran our first online quiz which was a huge success – we raised €3,600 and this went

towards payment of the new lights.

Where does your money go?

Monies raised through this quiz will go towards projects outlined in this Newsletter. FCDA has been successful in accessing national and local grants, however many grants require match funding of between 10% and 25% and this means we need to raise funds to support projects for the benefit of our community. We also have an annual insurance cost for which FCDA paid €2,200 last year.

FCDA Projects undertaken over the past few years

Town & Village Renewal Scheme (T&V)

In 2018 FCDA applied and was successful in getting Town & Village Renewal Scheme funding for specific projects identified locally with advice from experts in the field and agreed by Wexford County Council. A total of €124,000 was approved and a grant of €99,000 received, with FCDA providing match funding of 10% and voluntary labour worth 10% of the overall project. Our cash match funding was sourced through community contributions and loans. The overall focus of this scheme was on providing amenities for locals and tourists with the aim of creating sustainable and beneficial resources for all. Projects delivered under the T&V scheme are outlined on pages 2 & 3.

Upgraded website

www.fernsvillage.ie

The website's remit is to act as a community resource, support local businesses and promote tourism. We use the FernsVillage brand online to tap into what makes us unique - our people and our heritage. We invite you to look at the website and let us know if you have any suggestions. If you are a business, we are compiling a business listing and ask that you contact secretaryfcda@fernsvillage.ie if you



would like to be included.

Interpretative Exhibition

This exciting new visitor attraction, called the 'Medieval Ferns Experience' (MFE) is located in Ferns Community Centre and tells the story of Ferns, focusing on our significant medieval story, from the time of St. Aidan, through its dominance as the seat of power for the Kings of Leinster, to the arrival of the Normans. We are proud of our title as the Ancient Capital of Leinster and we have a huge story to tell – this new attraction will help showcase this story.

The MFE will act as a tourism information point - a tourism attraction with year round opening to complement the Ferns Castle and Visitor Centre

which generally opens from May to September. The new attraction will be run as a social enterprise by volunteers and with the help of community employment schemes.

We want to showcase local crafts and skills, if you have gifts you would like to sell, we'd love to hear from you (medievalferns@fernsvillage.ie).

The MFE is in place and includes virtual reality, audio visual and other interactive elements to bring life and fun to the story of Ferns and its significant medieval past. To ensure ease of access, a new door will be installed, giving direct access to the 'MFE'. COVID lockdowns have delayed this step and we plan to complete when restrictions allow.

We are looking forward to opening the 'Medieval Ferns Experience' and to welcoming you for an 'open for locals' period. Thereafter an entry fee will be charged which will help to defray costs of running it.

Medieval themed playground

The new playground, sited at the back of Ferns Community Centre is a terrific amenity and a tangible link to our medieval past as the 'Ancient Capital of Leinster' - a fun addition for the enjoyment of local children and visiting families.

This is a community amenity – we ask for your help in keeping it user friendly, tidy and report any issues. We need your support in maintaining the playground and keeping it to a standard we can all be proud of.



Music

Ferns music tradition is legendary and the T&V funding gave us an opportunity to provide alternative amenities for our young people. Funding for purchasing soundproofing for a room in the Community Centre enabled us to develop a space where young people will be encouraged to embrace their musical heritage.

Even though this facility is not yet open due to COVID restrictions, work is continuing by showcasing local musical talent through 'The Music of Ferns' Facebook page - a one stop platform for musicians/singers etc. If you know of someone who is interested in music in all its forms – from voice to instruments, please make contact through The Music of Ferns Facebook page.



Ferns Tourism Plan

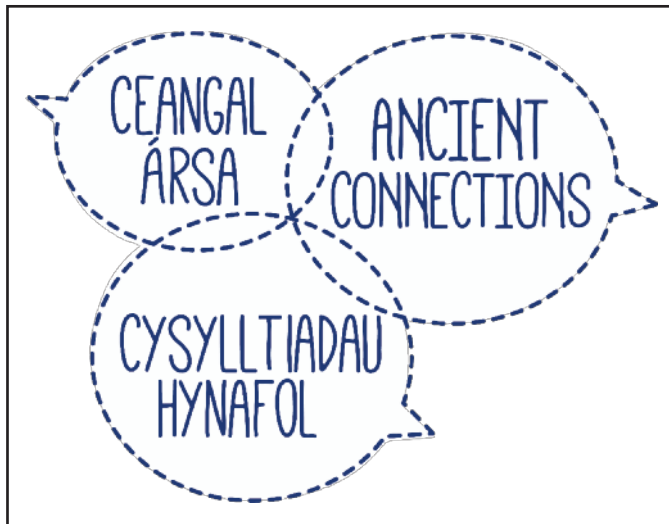
The drafting of the Plan was undertaken over a ten month period and in consultation with community representatives, businesses and stakeholders, through a range of interviews, workshops, site visits and meetings.

The Plan makes recommendations on the development of tourism over the next 5 years and takes account of other projects currently running in Ferns i.e. Ancient Connections (see pages 4 & 5). A Summary of the Plan can be accessed on our website homepage on www.fernsvillage.ie.

Radio & Video Workshops

Workshops under this project were aimed at teenagers from 13 to 17. Three videos and a podcast were produced which are available on the Ferns Village channel on YouTube under the 'Video & Radio Production Workshop 2019' playlist.

Ancient Connections in Ferns



Ancient Connections is a heritage, tourism and arts project from Wexford and Pembrokeshire County Councils, linking County Wexford in Ireland with North Pembrokeshire in Wales, specifically the ancient towns of **Ferns** and **St. Davids**. The aim is to support rural communities and the local economy; improving the cultural offering and attracting more over-seas tourists to both regions. Currently running from April 2019 – November 2022, it will explore the mentoring relationships that link the two regions historically, including St. Aidan and St. David, and to motivate the communities on both sides of the Irish Sea to rediscover their joint heritage, shared stories, knowledge, skills and experience.

The project has already secured funds of over **€2 million**, from the European Regional Development Fund through the Ireland Wales Co-operation programme, for a suite of work-packages including Arts, Archaeology, Enterprise and Innovation, Community Projects, Festivals and Destination Marketing. The project will be supporting local government, community groups and individuals to position community partners in North Wexford and North Pembrokeshire as hubs for shared tourism activity, economic and community development.

Get involved by contacting

ancient.connections@wexfordcoco.ie and following us on Facebook @AncientConnect. New project website www.ancientconnections.com coming soon.

ANCIENT CONNECTIONS PROJECT UPDATE MARCH 2021

Due to the national COVID 19 restrictions since March of 2020, much of the planned Ancient Connections programme of customer facing

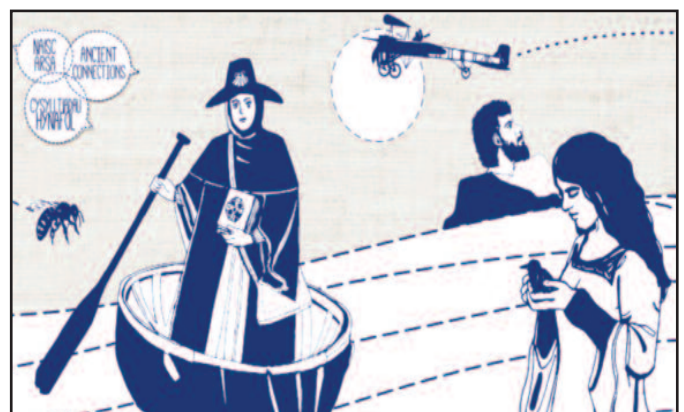
activities, events and public engagements have had to be postponed and re-scheduled into the end of 2021 or early 2022. Needless to say the project team and Wexford County Council have been working away in the back-ground during these difficult times, making preparations to bring you a wide variety of community development projects in the areas of Heritage, Archaeology, Arts, Culture and Enterprise, once restrictions are lifted.

The good news is that we have received an 8-month extension, to November 2022, for the project from our funding authority, to mitigate against these frustrating COVID delays. Wexford and Pembrokeshire County Councils have also applied for a further **Phase 2 funding** into 2023, which will build on the great work that will already have been achieved by our local communities and the *Ancient Connections* project.

We hope to bring you good news on that progress very soon. Please stay safe and well and keep an eye out for us once we are all free to enjoy our communities again!

For now, here are some of the developments and plans that Ferns and County Wexford can look forward to in the coming months...

Archaeological Field School – following the success of the online accredited course in summer 2020 and the Ferns Community Dig at Clone Church, the *Irish Archaeological Field School* are conducting two further online events for 2021. A three week **'Know Your Locality'** course was successfully conducted recently and had 300 people taking part. Scholarships supported by the *Ancient Connections* project for the *IAFS* online **"Forensic Anthropology – Ferns Focus"** course will take place in March. Follow the *Irish Archaeological Field School* on Facebook @IrishArchaeologyFieldSchool for further details.



History Hunters - a History Hunters programme by *Abarta Heritage* is now due to take the form of an online course in the Spring, which will be accessible for those living in both regions who wish to discover more about their heritage and research resources available. Follow *Abarta Heritage* on Facebook @AbartaHeritage for upcoming details

Public Art Commission – further public consultation for the proposed piece of public art for Ferns will commence in the second quarter of the year. Stage 1 (Expression of Interest) of the procurement process has been completed, with 5 short-listed artists selected to go through to Stage 2. Their proposals will be available for public consideration and the local community will have the opportunity to discuss and have input on the decision where the art might be sited and what winning proposal should be brought forward for development. All plans are subject to agreement with relevant Authorities and stakeholders.

Ferns Artist in Residence - David Begley has made great progress with the Monk's Garden at St. Edan's national school and has begun his artistic response on local hedgerows, through explorations and interviews with local farmers. Follow David's progress and art on Facebook and at www.davidbegley.com

Small Art Commissions – 4 artists have been commissioned (two per region), responding to the themes 'personal or collective pilgrimage or journeying', 'Sacred Places', 'Celtic Diaspora', 'ancestral heritage and a longing for home'. These will include public participation and working within the communities, so please support the Artists where/when you can. They will exhibit their work to the community later on in the project.



Monk's Garden, St. Edan's N.S. courtesy of David Begley.

Community Support Scheme – a number of small community projects are being supported through the project, including the making of medieval costumes; a medieval music composition to be performed in Ferns Cathedral and a rock opera based on the lives of St. Aidan and St. David, being supported by the local Ferns Choir. Further supports will be available, so be sure to subscribe to the Ancient Connections mailing list to receive notifications and news on further opportunities. Email ancient.connections@wexfordcoco.ie.

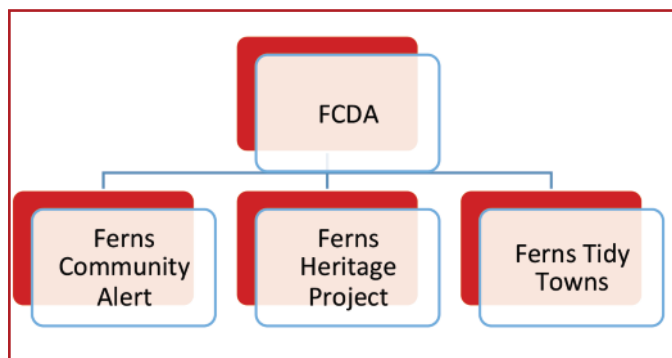
Animating Schools – after a very successful cultural exchange visit from our Welsh school-mates, the animation film programme with St. Edan's and Scoil Naomh Maodhog Ferns has been postponed until Autumn 2022, due to COVID 19.

Tourism Marketing - a marketing consultant has been appointed to deliver the project's destination marketing programme for Ferns and North Wexford, in a post-COVID environment. This will be in collaboration with local tourism suppliers, stakeholders and the Ferns Community Development Association's Tourism Development Plan. Further plans and support of Fern's interpretation and heritage trails will be announced in the coming months.

Enterprise Supports - the project team are currently working on developing a programme of training and mentoring supports for the new **Medieval Ferns Experience** and local tourism entrepreneurs, in association with Wexford LEO. The project's **"Exploring a Shared Past Literature Review"** by *Abarta Heritage* and the feasibility study research for a potential pilgrimage route between Ferns and St. Davids are available now by emailing ancient.connections@wexfordcoco.ie

Website - the project's website www.ancientconnections.com will be launched soon, which will be your one-stop-shop for all news, events, arts, tourism, archaeology and opportunities to get involved with the *Ancient Connections* project. For now, be sure to subscribe to the *Ancient Connections* online mailing list to receive notifications and news on further courses and opportunities. Email ancient.connections@wexfordcoco.ie and follow us on Facebook @AncientConnect

Work of FCDA



FCDA became a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG) in December last year and is run by Directors and a Management Committee – all on a voluntary, unpaid basis. CLG status ensures transparency and governance issues are complied with, particularly in relation to grants and funding. Before and during the pandemic the work of the FCDA has continued, meeting regularly online, generally twice a month, to ensure projects get over the line on time and to a high standard.

Each of the sub-groups (see graphic above) have their own structure, source their own funds and identify actions and projects particular to their aims and objectives. Each sub-group is represented on the FCDA Management Committee. Congratulations to Ferns Tidy Towns group for winning two awards in the Keep Wexford Beautiful Environment Awards last year – another great year and recognition of work done by dedicated volunteers. You can follow their activities on Facebook: [@fernstidytowns](https://www.facebook.com/fernstidytowns).

If you are in business and would like to get involved in a Business sub-group, we would like to talk to you. You can make contact by emailing: secretaryfcda@fernsvillage.ie. It's great to see new businesses opening up - we wish a warm welcome to Osbornes Supermarket on The Square, Ferns Furniture & Kitchen Re-Spray in Aldercourt and My Retro Kid, an online childrens' goods shop.

#workingtogether

#caringforourcommunity

A special thanks to all essential workers who have worked so hard over the past difficult year in keeping

our community going and keeping vital services open. Thanks also to all healthcare workers and carers for their immense and ongoing contribution to the health of our community.

We would like to thank Wexford Local Development for covering printing costs of this Newsletter and for their continued support.

SERVICES

There are a range of services available currently in the Ferns area – if you are interested or know anyone who might be interested, the following is a list of contact points:

Ferns BFriendly



A voluntary telephone befriending service in the Ferns area for people experiencing loneliness or isolation.

Ph: 087-1691919.

Ferns & District Meals On Wheels

Delivering hot meals every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Meals are cooked fresh daily by County Wexford Community Workshop at a cost of €5 per meal and delivered by volunteer drivers.



Ph: 087-4189740

COVID-19 Community Helpline:



A dedicated helpline was 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)

Residents Associations

Are you currently in a Residents Association or would you like to start one?

Wexford Local Development supports local community groups to start, plan, link with other groups, run community activities and apply for grants. If you would like support for your Residents Association please contact:

John Kelly
(Community Development Worker)
on: 087- 7940830 or jkelly@wld.ie

Future Projects

In our previous Newsletter (available on www.fernsvillage.ie) we talked about our Vision for Ferns which was informed by a number of consultation processes and documents. We will continue to represent the interests of our community on issues affecting our community.

We work in collaboration with a variety of groups, clubs and agencies to further the aims of our Association. In the coming months we will distribute a Community Survey which we urge all members of

our community to respond to. The Survey will be distributed, subject to COVID-19 restrictions and will also be available online. This survey will help us develop a community vision for Ferns. Keep an eye on our website and social media platforms for updates.

Later this year we will hold an AGM, subject to Covid restrictions and we encourage members of the public to attend. Details will be notified on FernsVillage social media and website. Come join the discussion – your input is important. You can keep up to date with our activities by visiting the FernsVillage website.

It must be said that without the hard work of many volunteers we could not have delivered on the many projects and campaigns over the years. The success of volunteerism cannot be underestimated – without it, many of our clubs, groups and associations would not exist or be as successful as they are - it is a testament to the passion, belief and vision of those involved!

To help us promote Ferns and support local, we ask that you help us by using the hashtag #FernsVillage online.

We think of those in our community and beyond who are negatively impacted by the current pandemic - whether through loss of loved ones, loss of jobs or the strain of dealing with everyday issues at this extraordinary time.





Contact information:

Email: secretaryfcd@fernsvillage.ie

Website: www.fernsvillage.ie



@FernsVillage



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Ferns Village YouTube channel

#supportlocal #localtalent #shoplocal #workingtogether



The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018-2022 is funded by the Irish Government through the Department of Rural and Community Development and co-funded by the European Social Fund under the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020