

BWRA NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALLINACURRA WESTON RESIDENTS' ALLIANCE



PRIDE OF PLACE?

Earlier this year, Limerick City Council invited Our Lady of Lourdes Community Umbrella Group to take part in the *Pride of Place* competition.

Each year, Limerick City Council (LCC) selects 5 communities to enter the Competition and this year it has nominated Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, St. Mary's Park, St. Munchin's Family Resource Centre, Garryowen Community Committee and Doras Luimni for the *Pride of Place*

competition, which recognises the selfless work being carried out in communities all over Ireland. There are separate competitions for city and county based community and voluntary groups. Entry to the competition is through nomination by the relevant local authority at a cost of €3,000 per community, which is sponsored by the Council.

Pride of Place is an initiative of the local authority all-Ireland Steering Forum. The forum is hosted by Co-Operation Ireland, a charity which has been

involved in promoting peace-building activities North and South for the last 30 years.

When LCC invited local community and voluntary groups in the parish to a meeting it was BWRA PRO, Cathal McCarthy that suggested that the Umbrella Group would be the best organisation to spearhead the campaign.

Cathal, who represents the Weston Gardens on the Umbrella Group, said he was delighted by the opportunity.

Continued overleaf...

PRIDE OF PLACE

"I felt it provided an opportunity for different groups in the parish to start working together and that it would make the Umbrella Group more relevant to the members; three had already left and we were failing to attract new ones" said Cathal.

"Unfortunately the goodwill didn't materialise from those we needed it from. It was suggested that our Garden of Hope would be the finishing point for the judges and that we might hold a bar-b-que if the weather was good, but then we were told that there were objections from certain quarters, that it wasn't a proper garden that there would be insurance issues. We had more insurance issues when we asked for the ride-on lawnmower" said Matt Collins, Chairperson of the BWRA.

"It was also proposed that we would make a film, but then we were being told what we can and can't say and where we would be filmed, part of our pride is our resilience in the face of so-called regeneration" said Cathal

The straw that broke the camel's back was an e-mail from the CEO of the CSG.

"It was the disclaimer at the start that did it, we discussed it at a BWRA committee level and we decided to resign from the Umbrella Group and I resigned as RAPID Rep" said Matt

However, the Weston Gardens Residents' Association remains a member of the Umbrella Group

"I'm the Community & Voluntary Forum Rep for the parish and I made a prior commitment to the Forum, the WGRA will make a decision in October, but we have withdrawn from the Pride of Place competition also" said Cathal.

CLOSED SHOP GROUP

In the interest of openness and transparency we feel compelled to publish the following piece of correspondence:

On Mon, Jun 25, 2012 at 11:05 AM, LeeAnn Kennedy Purcell wrote:

Without Prejudice / Private and Confidential

Contents not to be forwarded or disclosed without the express permission of the Author

Hello Cathal & Mattie

WHAT ABOUT A REAL HORSE PROJECT?



The horse is a celebrated animal in Limerick; we have the horses at the Hunt Museum (above), decorated by children from regeneration areas, the murals at the Regeneration offices at the LEDP and let's not forget the Rubber bandits ...GIDDY UP NOW BABY! It's really amazing that we haven't a real horse project by now. It cost the Council over €300,000 to take horses to the pound last year. Instead of a ban, why not regulate for them. The BWRA would like to assist any horse owner that wants to campaign for a Horse project. If there's anyone interested, then give us a shout.

Thank you for your email the other night.

I just wanted to refer to your advertisement on the Leader recently. I was more than a little disappointed about your reference to the community lawnmower and "alleged insurance issues". They were very valid reasons and our honest answer and I think that it was very unfair of you to intimate otherwise. Furthermore as you know the Estate Management Committee is a subcommittee of the CSG. We do have residents on the Committee and indeed a local person is the Chair.

Can you explain why you decided to mention these two particular items in your advertisement without verifying them first and what was your intention in doing so? We need to improve our communication if we are to work together for the benefit of our community – which is, at all times, my priority.

I await hearing from you.

Regards

Lee-Ann

Lee-Ann Kennedy Purcell
CEO

Our Lady of Lourdes Community Services Group Ltd
Greenfields Cross,
Rosbrien, Limerick

Here's our reply:

Dear Lee-Ann

We refer to your recent e-mail of Monday, June 25, 2012.

As the intended recipient, the Ballinacurra Weston Residents' Alliance (BWRA) reserves the right to publish all correspondence/e-mails that we receive regarding issues of concern to our

community. Only correspondence / emails that are sent/received on behalf of our individual members are treated as private and confidential. This is our policy and we are not about to change it because of the legally threatening disclaimer at the beginning of your e-mail.

You referred to our most recent ad in the Limerick Leader and our reference to the refusal of local Estate Management to allow use of the community ride-on lawnmower in our area because of alleged insurance issues.

Last year, the BWRA purchased a petrol lawnmower, which broke down for the third time on May 14. We had contacted the Estate Management Officer, Katherine Kirby, on May 15 requesting that rubbish that had been gathered during a community clean-up organised by the BWRA be collected and that the community ride-on lawnmower be used to cut the grass on the numerous large green sites in our area, we were refused on both counts.

Prior to publication of the ad we had enquired with 3 insurance companies regarding insurance for ride-on lawnmowers for use in the community and we discovered that is a relatively simple process. Indeed, if we had the model and serial number we could provide you with quotations, in fact the BWRA could purchase our own insurance to use the ride-on lawnmower ourselves. We are also aware that the ride-on lawnmower was recently used to cut the Parish Priest's grass in his large garden, there didn't seem to be an insurance issue then so it is accurate to describe the matter as "alleged" when referring to the excuse we were given.

As you are aware, the BWRA has entered Tidy Towns. We were invited to

do so by Limerick City Council and we are working with the Weston Gardens Residents' Association (WGRA) and the School Completions Programme in this regard. We had hoped to receive support from service providers such as local Estate Management, but they are also entering Tidy Towns for estates outside the designated regeneration area. It is our view that service providers shouldn't be allowed to enter such competitions, but act as support for established residents groups, such as ourselves.

We are more than aware that the Estate Management Committee is a sub-committee of the Community Service Group Ltd. (CSG). You may be aware that your appointment as CEO of the CSG was prompted by a recommendation arising from a report on the "Review of the Structure, System, Role and Functions of Our Lady of Lourdes Community Service Group Ltd" in 2010. The BWRA received a copy of this report from an anonymous sender last year.

The report noted that the 46 positions available on the sub-committees were taken up by a total of 29 people with 2 positions vacant and stated that:

"The sub committees do not have constitutions and do not operate in a similar manner to one another. There are no common membership, nomination, representation, election or rotation procedures across the Advisory Groups/Committees. The membership is in general by invitation with each Advisory Group/Committee tending to operate in its own fashion which has grown up over the years. This can lead to the domination of a Committee/Advisory Group by a single member or small number of members, which can further reinforce the perception in some quarters of the 'closed shop' syndrome"

We recently became aware that a resident of our area for little under a year is our "Community Representative" on the Estate Management Sub-Committee and that this was by invitation of the CSG. Incidentally, this resident and her husband were imported into our area last year by the Regeneration Agency. They were given a house in the area ahead of others on the housing list and at a time when perfectly good houses on the same street were being boarded up and refused to families in need. Her husband was subsequently co-opted on to the agency-

established residents' forum to replace the Community Representatives that had resigned the previous year. Their loyalty and commitment to our community is highly questionable. We are unaware who chairs the Estate Management Sub-Committee.

Prior to receiving the report, the BWRA wrote to the CSG requesting to be involved and asking to nominate representatives, after all, based on completed membership forms we are representative of 95% of residents. We were politely thanked for our interest, but informed that membership was by invitation only as this was, bizarrely, considered by the CSG to be best practice, despite having commissioned and received a report that stated otherwise.

The report also noted that the CSG Board of Directors contained only 4 members that were resident in the parish and stated that "these have all been on the Board since the incorporation of the CSG in 1995. This is a further potential cause of the CSG's perception as being a 'closed shop'." None of these parishioners live in our area. It may interest you to know that before we had read the report, we referred to the CSG as the "Closed Shop Group". Needless to say, we still do, as the reports recommendation that 4 Community Representatives should be nominated by Our Lady of Lourdes Umbrella Group was never implemented. The cosmetic reshuffling of the Board of Directors hardly constitutes the real change and inclusiveness called for by the report.

The report highlighted the many other failings of the CSG such as a "lack of equality of area and interest representation on Board and Advisory Group/Committees", a "lack of openness and transparency in relation to the organisations structures, management and operation", a "lower than desirable level of involvement of the client groups in management structures", "failure to reach the 'hard to reach'", a "lack of an inclusive of all ethos" and a "perception that people from certain areas are not welcome". We would assert that these remain live issues.

You are of course correct when you say that "we need to improve our communication". A good example of this lack of communication is provided by the CSG applying on 31 May for planning permission to build a two-

storey extension for the provision of toilet facilities and changing rooms for the all-weather pitch without involving the Interim Pitch Management Committee (of which we are both members) in the process or even informing us that plans had been submitted. While the plans are to be welcomed, it was Limerick City Council that wrote to the BWRA with the news and invited us to examine the plans before making a submission, not the CSG. As you are aware, the BWRA had campaigned for the toilets and changing facilities to be provided for from the beginning.

The BWRA wants to see more inclusive structures put in place that would allow for real community participation in the day-to-day management of our estate. We believe that positions, such as that of Estate Management Officer, should only be open to residents. If such paid workers decide to leave our community, as Ms. Kirby did over 8-years ago, then they should also leave their job. Ultimately, we believe that such work should be voluntary and in these austere times that makes perfect sense. Sub-committees should be directly elected by and accountable to the community. Our community has been failed by our so-called service providers, who effectively colluded in the destruction of our area.

We hope that this provides some clarification and we would like to take the opportunity to congratulate the CSG on your successful application for a Social & Voluntary grant, we would like to know how you intend to spend the €24,000 awarded to the CSG.

Finally, please be advised that both the BWRA and the WGRA will not be participating with you in Pride of Place as we feel that this would send a false impression of unity and inclusiveness; these are issues that we should be highlighting and seeking to change, not pretending that they already exist.

Yours Sincerely

Matt Collins
Chairperson, Ballinacurra Weston
Residents Alliance
087 65 77 063

Cathal McCarthy
PRO, Ballinacurra Weston Residents'
Alliance
Cathaoirleach, Weston Gardens
Residents' Association
087 784 50 70

WESTON ON THE TELLY:

Dirty Old Clowns & the Not So Secret Millionaire

We have had what can only be described as a media frenzy in Ballinacurra Weston in recent months, with two popular light entertainment shows – *Dirty Old Towns* and *The Secret Millionaire* – making us the focus of attention for the nation's entertainment.

So why the sudden interest in our beleaguered community? Who would benefit from all this exposure?

DIRTY OLD TOWNS

Dirty Old Towns was filmed here in March and aired in May. They were invited here by the Regeneration Agency and much of the show featured BWRA Chairperson, Matt Collins.

"At first they wanted nothing to do with us; they only wanted to film the all-weather pitch being built by contractors and the Grotto being restored by Limerick Civic Trust, but when they realised that there was no community involvement they begged us for our help, saying that the regeneration agency had let them down and they needed to film residents" said Matt.

The BWRA had sent *Dirty Old Towns* a proposal to "help tackle some eye-sores & waste ground in the residential area of Ballinacurra Weston". The proposal identified a number of sites that needed the co-operation of the Regeneration Agency to fix up; replacing rock armour with bollards and large concrete flower pots, supplying materials to paint the boarded-up houses and getting Diarmuid Gavin's advice on finishing the Garden of Hope:

"It is our hope that *Dirty Old Towns* will assist us in lobbying the necessary agencies in getting their support for such works."

Dirty Old Towns were delighted with the proposal, but said that the Regeneration Agency were enraged by it and turned it down; "Claire Feeney



Dirty Old Clown: Diarmuid Gavin

gave out stink to me on the phone for suggesting it and wouldn't talk to me for weeks" said Assistant Producer Yvonne Kinsella.

"We believed the *Dirty Old Towns* version of events, as the same proposal had been ignored by the Agency when we sent it to them last year, so we agreed to let them film a community work day we had organised on the Garden of Hope, they sub-contracted a film crew to film us because there schedule was tight. Diarmuid Gavin never came near us" said Matt.

Having rejected the BWRA proposals, the Regeneration Agency then added insult to injury by hiring outside artists to paint murals near the Church.

"They by-passed local artists and paid €7,000 to contract artists for three days work, they could have helped with our proposal three times over for that money and our artists would have done a better job for free" said Matt.

The *Dirty Old Towns* crew returned a few weeks later to film the opening of the all-weather pitch. Cathal McCarthy, PRO for the BWRA, was asked to do an interview; "They wanted me to meet them at the all-weather pitch and asked me to bring my family. They had already interviewed me at the Grotto because my Granduncle was involved in building it in 1954, but they said that the sound was bad"

"I'm also on the Pitch Management Committee and they said that they wanted to talk about that. I have concerns about the lack of access that the local youth have to the pitch and



Not So Secret Millionaire: Richard Mulcahy

token nature of the so-called Management Committee, but I had a feeling that it would be edited out so I declined to be interviewed. With the benefit of hindsight I'm glad that I did" said Cathal

Dirty Old Towns did portray a positive image of our community and Matt Collins represented us brilliantly but the show gave the impression that the Garden of Hope was inspired by *Dirty Old Towns* and claimed that it was done in conjunction with regeneration.

"It gave the impression that the Regeneration Agency was working with us and made out that they were great. Every other organisation from Regeneration to the CSG got mentioned and acknowledged except the BWRA I was disappointed by that," said Matt.

"We had no say in how they would edit the show and we only had their word that they would be honest – they lied. They were brought in by regeneration as a PR stunt" said Cathal.

The BWRA proposal for *Dirty Old Towns* can be found under 'quick links' at www.limerickregeneration.org.

SECRET MILLIONAIRE

No sooner had *Dirty Old Towns* left with their stardust and TV magic than another camera crew arrived, this time to film archive footage of the area that wouldn't be aired for 30-years, or so they said.

ABC Television Ireland was the company that Laura Ellis claimed to be working for when she contacted our PRO, Cathal McCarthy.

"I agreed to meet with her, but decided to check out her story beforehand. I was less inclined to take media types at their word after our experience with *Dirty Old Towns*"

"I found that they had a website that was under construction and that it was registered to a Rónán Ó Muirthile, who I discovered, is a radio presenter with *Newstalk* and a producer with *Amino TV* and that he was nominated for an award in 2011 for his work on *Secret Millionaire*. Looking at Amino's website I noticed that Ms. Ellis had in fact called me from their office"

"When I met Ms. Ellis I explained to her what the BWRA was all about and asked would she be contacting Matt, she said she would. I was told that they would contact me again in two weeks to interview me, but that was the last I ever heard from them" said Cathal.

There was no further contact between the BWRA and ABC Television Ireland. Ms. Ellis and the camera crew arrived on schedule with interviewer/Director Richard Mulcahy and began filming and interviewing pre-selected residents and community workers.

It wasn't until they were challenged by a passing resident that they decided to interview BWRA representatives. They were filming an interview in our Garden of Hope with former resident and CDP worker, Paddy Hynes, when they were asked why they were talking about our garden with someone that had no involvement in it. They were directed towards Matt Collin's home, where Matt and Steven Corbett were standing at the wall chatting.

"My brother Anthony let out a roar and wanted to know why they were talking to Paddy, why weren't they talking to them lads up there and he pointed them towards myself and Steven. Anthony was fuming and I don't blame him – ever since we started the garden others have been taking credit for it" said Matt.

"I think Anthony gave them a fright because they came running up to us asking for an interview. I don't think they'd have come near us otherwise"

Former resident, Steven Corbett, believes that the interviews they gave might not have been recorded.

"They never miked us and I found out later that they miked everyone else that they spoke to. Yer man [Richard Mulcahy] kept firing questions at us and was very supportive, but I got the

impression that the others couldn't wait to get away from us." said Steven

Matt agrees, "He [Richard Mulcahy] was very gung-ho, telling us not to give up and keep up the fight and to keep at it. He had us outside the burnt-out houses condemning the way regeneration was being done, and with him egging us on to say more".

"About a week later we heard that he turned up to the community centre and presented the CSG with a bus covered in balloons with OLOLCSG on the number plates and that he was the secret millionaire."

Matt had campaigned for a community bus during his time as RAPID Rep for the parish, raising it at every meeting he attended before he resigned, now that we have one is he relieved?

"If the CGS wouldn't let us use the ride-on lawnmower to cut the green sites for *Tidy Towns* then what are the chances that they'll let us use the bus; it was given to the CSG and the BWRA wasn't invited to the presentation. I'd say it'll be used by the favoured few or eventually get sold like the last one." said Matt.

SECRETIVE MILLIONAIRE?

Weston's Secret Millionaire, Richard Mulcahy, was born in 1955 and educated in Gonzaga College Dublin, he is the son of the "medical maverick" Risteárd Mulcahy, the internationally-renowned cardiologist and author. He is also the grandson of Richard James Mulcahy, former Army General and Commander-in-Chief, founding member and leader of Fine Gael. - he fought in the 1916 Easter Rising, served as Chief of Staff of the IRA during the War of Independence and became commander of the pro-treaty forces in the Irish Civil War after the assassination of Michael Collins.

Mulcahy is currently Executive Chairman at *SmartBuilder Software Limited*, which he established with his business partner Peter Daly in 2010. The company has offices in Dublin and London. SmartBuilder1 is a mobile software system which is designed to address major contractor problems such as bringing in projects on time and with the right quality, regeneration could certainly have some of that technology. Previous to that he was involved with Fitzers Catering Limited, Systems Solutions Limited and Cleantech Ireland. That much we do know.

We are not sure if he is the same Richard Mulcahy with "20 years' experience in the manpower industry" who formerly managed *Swift Technical* for many years, growing the company to become one of the leading international providers of manpower services to the Oil and Gas industry, the same Richard Mulcahy that is currently the group leader of *Bolashak*, which services Kazakhstan's Oil & Gas industry.

We are not sure because there are no pictures of the aforementioned Richard Mulcahy's to be found anywhere online, not even on his own website. The picture featured in this article is taken from an obscure interview that Mulcahy gave to Turkish television in 2009.

It is curious that someone who would appear to shun the limelight would suddenly embrace it by becoming a poverty tourist for the nation's entertainment; Mulcahy spent 11 days living on the dole in a flat on Parnell St and would have had to surrender his credit cards and other items of value. He is also due to make an appearance on *The Late Late Show* when it returns to our screens in September.

Secret Millionaire airs on September 17th; we'll just have to tune in if we want to find out more.

WHO BENEFITS?

It was obvious with *Dirty Old Towns* who was meant to benefit – the Regeneration Agency. At the time they were hoping to be kept open by the government and what better way to promote the fantasy that they were doing a good job than through the popular TV show. Despite all the omissions and outright lies, the Agency was closed in June. It can be reasonably argued that the exposure on *Dirty Old Towns* has enhanced the reputation of Ballinacurra Weston for the better.

With *Secret Millionaire* it's not as clear as the show is yet to air, but we suspect that it is intended to give support to the service providers that have failed our community – local Estate Management and the CSG, which are in dire need of reform. What is obvious is that the crew from *Amino TV* made every effort to steer their secret millionaire clear of any critical voices. The millionaires' new business might benefit from the positive publicity that the show will provide.

When all is said and done the only obvious beneficiaries are the parasitic programme makers that make their living feeding off our misery.

REGENERATION:

HUMAN RIGHTS BASED CAMPAIGN UNDERWAY

OVER a hundred delegates representing Limerick and Dublin regeneration areas have attended a meeting to start a human rights campaign.

The meeting, held in Liberty Hall, Dublin on 15th May, provided an opportunity for regeneration area residents to share their experience of conditions before, during and after regeneration and allowed residents to learn from each other about what is really happening on the ground in the different estates.

The meeting was organised by the Dublin based Tenants First and facilitated by the Community Action Network (CAN). All four Limerick regeneration areas were represented and the evidence gathered will form the basis of a human rights campaign.

Pat Begley, Chairperson of the Carew / Kincora Concerned Residents said he was impressed by the turnout, "It was great to meet with the Dublin residents and learn that we had similar experiences"

"I was very impressed with the support that Dublin residents had from their community workers, it's a different story in Limerick".

Tommy Daly, Chairperson of the Moyross Residents' Alliance said that he found it an emotional experience, "I found it heart breaking listening to some of the stories, the way residents were blackguarded so the Council could grab the land for the developers. I am very angry about the way we are been treated in Limerick".

Chairperson of the Ballinacurra Weston Residents Alliance, Matt Collins, said that the situation in Limerick cannot be allowed to continue, "Our human rights are being trampled on and it has to stop. We had fewer problems five years ago; regeneration has destroyed our communities with depopulation and the boarding-up of homes".

"The Council knows well that when they board up a house it is systematically looted for copper, vandalised, used for drug parties and eventually burnt out.

Cathal McCarthy of Limerick Regeneration Watch said that regeneration is being carried out much differently 60 miles away in Tralee; "if you're a homeowner and they want to knock your home they ask you first, if you agree they move you into rented accommodation and they pay the rent for you. When your new house is built they move you back in as a homeowner. It's not done house by house, but block by block, so if most people in the block don't want to be knocked they have the refurbishment option".

"I would like to thank CAN for

sponsoring the bus for Limerick delegates" said Mr. McCarthy, "and in particular I would like to thank Dr. John Bissett of Tenants First and Cecilia Forrestal of CAN for travelling to Limerick last week with award winning film maker, Donnacha O'Brian to begin the process of collecting residents testimonies, it was a busy couple of days but we made a good start to our human rights campaign. "

The meeting was also attended by sociologists from the University of Limerick; Department head, Dr. Eoin Devereux, Dr. Martin Power and Dr. Cliona Barnes. The Power / Barnes report, "Feeling Safe in Our Community", was submitted by the Limerick delegates along with other reports on regeneration areas as part of their evidence.



ABOVE: Donnacha O'Brian, *Film-maker*; Dr. John Bissett, *Tenants First*; Cathal McCarthy, *Limerick Regeneration Watch*; Cecilia Forrestal, *CAN* and Luke McNamara, *Film -maker*. After a day's filming and documenting evidence.

BELOW: Dr. John Bissett, *Tenants First*; Matt Collins, *BWRA*; Ronald Collins and Allish O'Connell of the *BWRA Youth Committee* at the meeting in Dublin.



A Picture Speaks A Thousands Words

By Steven Corbett



It's funny that while ghost estates are exempt from the household tax, regenerations horror estates like Ballinacurra Weston are not. If you find yourself living next a boarded-up house and you finally crack from the anti-social behaviour and sell your house back to the council for €30,000 to become a tenant elsewhere you will be made to pay the €100 household tax, you will be made pay any outstanding water rates and you will be made pay up €2,000 to board up your home when you leave. Regeneration areas should be exempt from the tax – Don't Register, Don't pay.

Our new super Manager has said he wants to empower communities to participate; he has to empower the people living in regeneration areas after being excluded for the last 4 years. The Council are getting less money than Mr Kenny had but if its spent right they can make a big improvement on peoples life's. Right now in the regeneration area in Ballinacurra Weston it's like something you would see in World War 2 films after a bomb raid best of luck Mr Conn Murray, you have a hard job ahead of you. (Steven Corbett is a former resident of Crecora Avenue, Ballinacurra Weston).

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