

Encouraging visitors to stay in the Geopark for longer

A NEW pilot sustainability scheme for tourism businesses within the Marble Arch UNESCO Global Geopark (MACUGG) area has been hailed a great success.

The initiative which began last year saw eight enterprises from both sides of the border take part in a tailor-made 'Sustainability Business Training Programme', which had the aim of implementing sustainability practices in line with the Geopark's charter.

"We were delighted with the positive feedback and engagement by the eight businesses who took part in this pilot scheme. Following evaluation of this programme we plan to extend it to the wider Geopark community."

Tara Smith, Development Officer for Tourism and Business, MACUGG said.

As visitor numbers continue to rise, particularly to popular sites such as Cullcagh Board-



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walk Trail, Marble Arch Caves, Cavan Burren Park and Tullydermot Falls, the Geopark is looking at ways of how to encourage visitors to stay and explore the area for longer.

Chairman of the Geopark Committee, John Paul Feeley

commented that, "Engagement with the local business community is a key priority for the MACUGG in driving sustainable economic development within the Geopark."

The training was delivered by one of Ireland's leading

tourism consultants, "The Tourism Space" on behalf of MACUGG. Four of the businesses came from Cavan; Drummully Boxty, The Keepers Arms, Cavan Adventure Centre and The Anglers Rest and the remainder from Fer-

managh; Rushin House Caravan Park, Tullymill Restaurant, Dulrush Fishing Lodge and Corralea Adventure Centre.

The training programme is one element of a LEADER funded cooperation project between Cavan and Fermanagh Local Action Groups aimed at enhancing the visitor experience around the 'Cullcagh Mountain Experience', a popular focal point within the Geopark which has seen a surge in visitors. Other elements of this funded cross border project include upgrades to infrastructure, a new brand identity and website for the Geopark and a PR and marketing plan.

Funding for the projects was through a €474,000/ £420,000 LEADER grant awarded to Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Cavan County Council, who jointly manage the Geopark.

Call for councillor training on mental health

SINN FEIN'S group leader on the local Council has called for members to undergo training around responsibilities and duties for public representatives, if contacted by persons experiencing suicidal ideation.

Councillor Barry McElduff said, "I have taken two calls in a week from people feeling very, very low and I have to be assured my initial response and the advice I impart is correct. It's my understanding in the first instance you refer the person to immediately contact their GP, but I'm worried people are saying they are already within the processes."

He proposed updated training for councillors adding: "Most of us don't have clinical expertise, but we are a first port of call by very many people who are struggling."

He also called on council to use the social media messaging platforms to remind people to see their GP as well as providing contact details for support services such as 'Lifeline' and 'Samaritans'.

Sinn Fein's Councillor Sheamus Greene had the same experience to his party colleague Councillor McElduff and noted: "I am not trained in any way to deal with it and the fear is you do the wrong thing. (Training) is a brilliant idea."

Since Christmas, Councillor Catherine Kelly, Sinn Fein said she has taken calls from persons: "With mental health challenges and in particular some young people, which is very troubling."

Ulster Unionist Group Leader Councillor Victor Warrington supported the proposal adding: "As councillors, we've all been contacted by individuals who've had problems. I can think of two young people who I've been contacted about."

He felt there may be "a mix up the spelling" of councillors as opposed to counsellors.

£350,000 buys stunning Tattykeeran church transformed into beautiful family home

BY LINDA SURPHLIS

A STUNNING former church dating back to 1848 has been transformed into a truly breathtaking family home.

The former Tattykeeran Church located just outside Tempo is currently listed on the market with a price tag of £350,000.

Nestled in the heart of the countryside the property spans two floors and comes complete with a work from home pod.

Belfast based estate agent Simon Breen describes the property as "beautifully and sympathetically" restored.

The main body of the original church provides the living accommodation with a spacious arrangement incorporating an open plan living/dining area open to fully fitted kitchen with feature double height ceiling throughout.

A spiral staircase leads to a stunning mezzanine level/pod area.



The former church dating back to 1848 has been transformed into a truly breathtaking family home

The property boasts four bedrooms which are accessed by an oak clad link. There is also a bi fold door allowing access to the Japanese style garden.

Although rural in its location the unique family home is just a short drive away from Enniskillen town centre and the Lough Erne Lakeland. Also located

close by are the villages of Tempo, Brookeborough and Fivemiletown with lots of retail, education and healthcare amenities readily accessible.

New project will improve community group leadership

AN AMBITIOUS project to identify and develop leaders and help secure a positive future for the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector was launched recently.

Fermanagh Trust in partnership with Holywell Trust in Derry and the Rural Community Network a regional support organisation that is based in Cookstown, launched 'Community Leadership in the West.'

The five-year project has been funded with a grant of £500,000 from the National Lot-



Lauri McCusker, Director of Fermanagh Trust

tery Community Fund.

It will offer qualifications to support the next generation of leaders to be able to respond and react confidently to the challenges they face and give them the skills to ensure that community voices are heard when working with statutory organisations.

Launched via a Zoom event more than 100 representatives from the Community and Voluntary sector, local decision makers and funders, were given an outline of the programme to date and upcoming

training opportunities.

People attending the virtual event were also able to give their views on the importance of leadership, helped plan future activities and discuss the challenges ahead for the community and voluntary sector.

Lauri McCusker, Director of Fermanagh Trust explained, "Community Leadership in the West has the potential to change the future of the VCSE sector - particularly important as we continue to adapt to the challenges around COVID-19. "The need for engagement

with communities on big issues and the skills needed for leadership in communities is more important than ever. As government continues to localise decision making about things like health services, policing and education, it's essential that local community leaders have the skills to influence those decisions."

Lauri added, "We're very excited about the positive feedback received at our launch. People are stepping up like never before and effecting real change via their various com-

munity groups. The aim of this project is to get more of this, support those who are making things happen and succession plan for the future, giving the next generation the chance they need. Our training programme includes a wide range of topics for all backgrounds and abilities.

A number of training courses are currently up and running. For a full outline of the programme of courses visit www.fermanaghtrust.org / E: leadership@fermanaghtrust.org / Tel: 028 66 320 210.

Curtain up . . . Ardhowen draws the curtain for local artists during lockdown

BY ZOE TUNNEY

THE Ardhowen Theatre and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council have adapted their service delivery to keep performers and artists working during lockdowns.

Although the arts sector has been hardest hit during the 2020/21 Covid-19 pandemic, with 61 per cent of employees in this sector being furloughed from work, management at the Ardhowen and the Council Arts Service have reacted quickly to venue closures and opened up online opportunities for local performers.

Virtual events featuring local talent have drawn large numbers of local viewers. More interestingly, the Ardhowen's weekly 'live' shows which are streamed on the theatre's Facebook page have attracted the Fermanagh diaspora from across the globe, bringing together Fermanagh folk living out lockdowns from places as far away as Newfoundland and New Zealand.

"We have people virtually waving to each other from wherever they have logged on," Bryony May from the Council Arts Service said.

"We have regulars now," added

Ian Davidson, the manager at the Ardhowen Theatre. "One regular logged on from a laptop on his knee while he waited in the A&E department from a hospital in New Zealand."

There have been challenges and barriers but both Bryony and Ian want to let people know that local talent are ready and waiting to entertain during these times of Netflix and box sets, all anyone has to do is to tap into shows with a click from the comfort of their own livingrooms.

The ever-popular live music nights at the Ardhowen had to be shelved along with the entire 2020 scheduled programme of drama, music, comedy, dance and workshops but one look at the Ardhowen's Facebook page shows that you can still enjoy a full programme albeit not from a seat in the auditorium.

The Friday night live music nights are now The Ardhowen At Home Friday night live sessions and has already featured opera from Andrew Irvine, folkabilly from the Hand Me Downs, trad sessions with Jack Warnock and performances from the Tumbling Paddies, the Benn Sisters and folk band, Tully.

There is also wonderful book and



VIRTUAL EVENTS . . . Curtain up for virtual shows at Ardhowen Theatre, Enniskillen

film clubs and an ongoing creative writing course. Avoid more screen fatigue with the online kids dance workshop and the recorded story-

telling sessions in both Irish and English for children. Also check out the theatre's website and social media for details of a "packed" pro-

gramme for Seachtain na Gaeilge and this year's virtual St Patrick's Festival which will run from Friday, 12th to Saturday, 20th March.

Charlie Lawson hints at soap secrets in upcoming autobiography

BY ROISIN HENDERSON

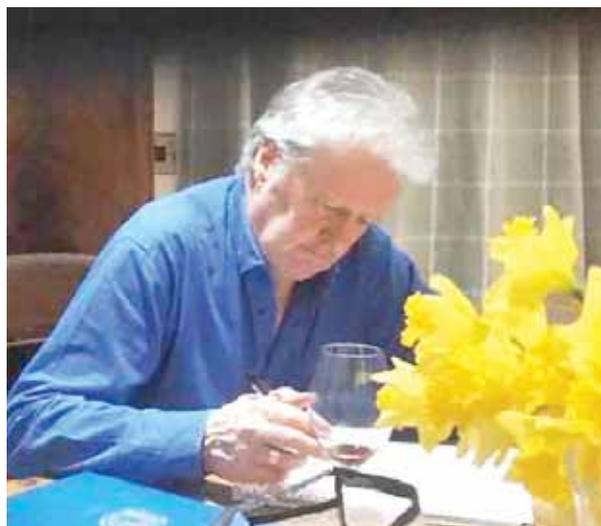
FERMANAGH actor Charlie Lawson has teased that he will be spilling at least some soap secrets from his time at Coronation Street in an upcoming book about his life.

The Enniskillen man first shot to fame thanks to his iconic portrayal of the Manchester-based soap's larger-than-life Jim McDonald.

Now, Mr Lawson is planning a 'tell all' account of his time on the famous cobbles in his upcoming autobiography.

Revealing he was working on the book in a recent tweet, complete with photograph of the 61-year-old hard at work on his manuscript, Mr Lawson hinted that it would include. In response to fans, who were eager to find out what the former soap superstar would be covering, he said there would be "good and bad anecdotes" from his life and career.

Mr Lawson, full name Quintin Charles Devenish Lawson, first assumed the role of Jim McDonald in 1989 and was a regular on Coronation Street up until 2000, but has made various guest appearances again since. Most recently, he returned to Weatherfield in 2018, in a storyline that saw Jim released from prison and with a shocking twist that left on-screen wife Liz McDonald



Charlie Lawson putting pen to paper for his book

stunned.

Previously he'd joked about how one of the biggest changes since his time as a regular on the show had been the drink that was served at the Rover's Return. While back in the 90s Mr Lawson had enjoyed real

Guinness in the fictional pub, real alcohol had been phased out over the years.

When tweeting about his upcoming autobiography, Mr Lawson's photo included a bottle of wine, which he joked was 'Ribena'.

Sean's memoir helps uncover family secrets

BY ROISIN HENDERSON

A DONEGAL-BASED author with strong Fermanagh connections has been helping unlock long-lost family secrets through his memoir.

Sean Stewart grew up in Belfast and now lives near Donegal Town, but his parents hailed from here in Fermanagh, with his father's family coming from just outside Belcoo and his mother's people coming from Arney and Scribbagh, near Cashel Cross. The county features heavily in his memoir, 'Never A Dull Moment', with the Herald also getting a mention.

Aside from being a personal, charming and often funny account of Sean's life growing up during the Troubles and his magical trips to Donegal, the book also features a chapter on his wife Mary's mother, Josie.

In the book Sean writes about how Josie had been adopted at a young age. However, as Sean and 'Belfast Mary', as his wife is known, only learned this later in Josie's life when she was suffering from dementia,

she had been unable to provide much information on her birth parents.

Sean and Mary have since been on a quest to find out more about Josie's family and the publication of 'Never A Dull Moment' has proven invaluable on that quest.

Since Sean outlined how Josie's mother, Catherine Miller, or Cassie Miller, had hailed from Castlederg, along with the other scant details of her life they were aware of helping prompt a long-lost relative to get in touch. This has helped them unlock the details to the tragic story of Catherine's life, as well as helping Mary find her birth grandmother's final resting place, which it turned

out was in Omagh.

Sean said many questions remained about Catherine's life, though, including whether a photograph of her exists and has vowed to continue his research.

"I had thought I would write one and only one book in my lifetime," he said. "I'm not so sure now."

