

North & West Clare

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Councillor Joe Killeen was added to the forum along with Councillor Gabriel Keating.

Members added to tourism forum

Dan Danaher

COUNCILLORS Joe Killeen and Gabriel Keating have been appointed to work on the Clare Tourism Advisory Forum, a committee implementing the county's new tourism strategy.

The councillors were elected following a meeting of the West Clare Municipal District held remotely on Friday.

Councillor Keating, who will share his term with Councillor Cillian Murphy, will join Councillor Killeen for the first half of the committee's term of office.

Rural Development director of services, Leonard Cleary outlined the original tourism taskforce that was developed in response to Covid-19 will now develop into the Clare Tourism Advisory Forum, which will be a steering body for the Clare Tourism Strategy.

There will be an online launch of the new Clare Tourism Strategy on April 22 involving representatives of the four municipal districts.

Forum members will be working with representatives of the Shannon Group and Fáilte Ireland who are seen as key players in the local tourism industry.

It is expected members of the Clare Tourism Forum will be formally ratified at the May local authority meeting, with the first meeting scheduled shortly afterwards.

Councillor Killeen said tourism is of critical importance to the survival of local communities in North and West Clare.

Councillor Murphy said he looked forward to picking up the work programme after Councillor Keating.

Councillor Keating said it was a great honour to be asked to work on this new advisory body and acknowledged great work has been completed promoting tourism development in West Clare.

"There is a huge opportunity to develop more tourism attractions and tourism products," he said.

Municipal District chairman, Councillor Joe Garrihy described this strategy as one of the most important documents that will be prepared for the county.

Councillor Garrihy congratulated the council officials who have worked on this document, which will help the county recover from the impact of Covid-19.

He said it is important to have a member from the Kilrush and Ennistymon Electoral District on this new committee in recognition of the huge role tourism plays in West and North Clare.

With a number of tourism projects planned by the rural directorate from Loop Head up to the Cliffs of Moher including major redevelopment of the Vandeleur Gardens in Kilrush, Councillor Garrihy stressed it is important to have an input from local councillors.

A vote of sympathy was recorded to Councillor P J Kelly and the Kelly family on the death of his brother, Gerry.

Matchmaking festival film puts Clare on centre stage

Fiona McGarry

HOT on the heels of the huge publicity boost for North Clare created by the TV show 'Smother' and the two-part documentary 'The Burren: Heart of Stone,' Lisdoonvarna is set for a visitor boost this summer after inspiring a movie on the world-famous matchmaking festival.

Entitled, 'As Luck Would Have It,' the movie premiered on the Hallmark Channel last week.

It stars Irish actor Allen Leech, who played Tom Branson in the hugely popular 'Downton Abbey,' and US actress JoAnne Garcia Swisher from the Netflix series 'Sweet Magnolia'.

The film's plot revolves around JoAnne's character, Lindsey, who travels to Ireland to acquire land to build a resort.

She decides to enter the local matchmaking festival to prove her investment and win over a handsome local.

The film is one of two major television productions to reference the festival in recent years.

The multi-award winning 'Schitt's Creek' features a Singles Week in the series four finale, with a serious nod to the festival by actress Annie Murphy who plays Alexis Rose.

"It's fantastic to see that the festival has captured the imagination of US film makers and we are honoured that it has been used as a key part in the film's plot," said Marcus White, festival organiser and tour operator.

"Since the film was released last week, we have been inundated with messages and emails from people enquiring about the festival, many of whom only discovered it existed from watching the movie.

"As the country begins to open up, this will definitely help in promoting County Clare and Ireland as a tourist destination going forward."

Mr White also said that articles about the film, both in the US media and in the UK's Times newspaper last week, had also contributed to a buzz about the festival.

Filmed entirely in Ireland in February of this year, the movie features locations such as the Cliffs of Moher and Lismore Castle as well as Glendalough in County Wicklow, Howth Castle and Johnnie Fox's Pub in Glencullen, Dublin.

The production team from Hallmark made contact with Julie Carr who looks after media relations for the festival back in 2019 and had an expressed initial interest in filming in the village.

"Although the matchmaking scenes were shot elsewhere, it was very clear to see that many elements of the festival have been replicated, such as the dancing, matchmaking and even the design of the posters for the festival are similar," she said.

The Lisdoonvarna Matchmaking festival was cancelled last year due to Covid-19.

This was the first cancellation in its 165-year history. An announcement about this year's festival is expected to be made in July.



Stars of the film 'As Luck Would Have It' JoAnne Garcia Swisher and Allen Leech. The movie is inspired by Lisdoonvarna's Matchmaking Festival and the Cliffs of Moher was one of the locations at which it was filmed this February.

EASTER TREAT AT SPA



There was another very successful Easter/Spring themed park event in the North Clare Amenity Park called Spring in the Spa.

The display ranged from Peter Rabbit to Giant Community Bunny and from Easter scene to the Celtic stone garden.

Pictured above are Daibhin Hawes 3, Caelan Hawes 2 and left is Ciana Rose Hawes 8 months.

The exhibition ran from April 1 to 15 and all Covid guidelines were in place at all times. Megan White organised a fantastic egg hunt with some residents from the King Thomond facility where little wooden decorated eggs hidden in the Park were exchanged for chocolate eggs!

The Events Team who organised this under the art direction of Leigh O'Connell included Mary Gardiner, Teresa Shannon, Erin Urquhart, Sharon Donnelly, Skye Jackson, Christina McCarthy, Anneli Vaughan with Lisdoonvarna Failsle Chairperson Marie Urquhart, Gemma Dowling and Jacqueline McCoy in addition to support, help, donations and participation by local businesses, schools, organisations and volunteers.



'Amazon' call scam takes in Clare woman

A CLARE woman was scammed out of "considerable" amounts of money from her bank account after being targeted in a telephone fraud.

Gardaí in Clare are investigating after the woman, who lives in the north of the county, was repeatedly contacted by the scammer who had claimed to be working for Amazon.

The woman received an automated call which told her that she was due a refund for a subscription to Amazon Prime of €79.99 which she had not authorised for a period of months.

She was instructed to press 1 and she was then transferred to the scammer who posed as a staff member.

According to Crime Prevention Officer, Sergeant Triona Brooks, "The male on the phone who had a foreign accent gave her the name of Michael.

"He requested that she log onto her Amazon Account which she did and she gave him her email address, user ID and password giving him access to all of her information.

"He proceeded to contact her a number of times getting her to download three different apps on her phone. All the time telling her he was helping her to get her money back. He was sometimes quite persistent on the phone and flustered the lady.

"He continued to call over a period of four days and took considerable amounts from her AIB and BOI accounts."

In light of this latest incident, gardaí are again urging people to be wary of potential scams.

Sergeant Brooks advised, "Never divulge personal or bank account details until you have validated that the caller is a genuine representative of the organisation they claim to represent. Hang up, look up the number independently."

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This latter when they are underlined by a recent and ongoing scam in which fraudsters have cloned the official phone number of the Department of Social Protection.

Sergeant Brooks said, "Your bank will never ask you for your credit or debit card PIN number or full online banking password.

"Your bank will never request you withdraw money to hand over to them or transfer money to another account, even if they say it is for safekeeping."

She added that people should take the caller's number and advise them that you will call them back once you have validated their identity.

"Use a phone number from the phone book or their website, not one given to you by the caller as this could be fake.

"If the caller is genuine they will understand and welcome your need to validate them. Don't allow yourself to be rushed. Take your time and do the relevant checks."

Kilkee water works delay raised

Jessica Quinn

COMPLETION of the Kilkee Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade has been hit with a delay as construction is now expected to be complete in 2025.

Concern about the hold up of the Kilkee works were voiced at the monthly meeting of Clare County Council.

The meeting heard that the Kilkee Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade is expected to go to construction in late 2023, with completion in late 2025.

Councillor Cillian Murphy said the project deadlines are "being kicked out and out" and he questioned if the plans are "in danger of being kicked out further?"

He urged that Irish Water be brought before Clare County Council to discuss the ongoing delays.

According to the Council's monthly management report a planning application is expected to be lodged in the second quarter of 2022.

"A design summary report was prepared by the Irish Water consultants in June 2020 in relation to the construction of a wastewater treatment plant.

"The project brief has been issued by Irish Water to EPS, the design/build contractor. The site selection process has to be finalised by Irish Water, EPS and their consultants before the project can progress, taking into account the work completed by the previous consultants," the report outlined.

"A planning application for the scheme is anticipated to be lodged by quarter two of 2022. The project is expected to go to construction in late 2023 with completion in late 2025."

Carmel Kirby, director of service, stated that the Council advocates to keep projects on track however, it does not "control the timeline".

She encouraged councillors to attend workshops which are frequently held with Irish Water and confirmed that the concerns raised at the meeting would be brought to Irish Water's attention by the council executive.

Library seeds grow it forward campaign for the county

CLARE County Library is sowing the seeds of growth across the Banner.

Libraries Ireland is partnering with Grow it Yourself (GIY) to roll out the 'Grow It Forward' campaign under the Government's Keep Well programme.

GIY is a not-for-profit social enterprise, based in County Waterford. It helps people to grow some of their own food at home, at work, at school and in the community.

The Grow it Forward campaign was launched last month.

Seeds have been dispersed from GIY (www.giy.ie) and from libraries nationwide over the past number of weeks.

Clare County Library has distributed packs of seeds to schools, nursing homes, community gardens and allotments via the

library home delivery service. They have also been given to individual gardeners.

Each pack contains five packets of seeds, a growing guide, and details on Clare library services and how to join the library. Clare County Library is now

asking recipients to document their growing journeys by sending photos and feedback to Clare County Library social media.

The local authority is also asking participants to Grow It Forward by sharing their produce as little seedlings, plants in pots or

the produce at harvest time with other people, so that many people can benefit from the impact of growing their own food.

For further information or to avail of the final number of packs get in contact with kilkee@clarelibrary.ie

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