

## COMMUNITY ACTION FOR KILFENORA

### ***Good news, a community action group has been formed to develop and promote Kilfenora!***

Most people in the Kilfenora community would agree that there is a clear need for re-generation, especially since the removal of our post office.

Yet for some time, Kilfenora and its associated townlands have been missing out on opportunities for grant-aided development schemes from Clare County Council and other funders. In addition, there has been no mechanism for promoting the village's interests, nor any effective means of consulting the community that achieves participation.

*(Note: the Kilfenora strategic planning exercise in 2018 unfortunately was not converted into action, in contrast with what happened in some other villages.)*

### **Working with Clare County Council**

Recently some concerned villagers met in a teleconference with the Council (Clare CoCo). A number of departments were involved, plus two Councillors - Joe Garrihy and Joe Killeen.

- A wide-ranging set of ideas (plus photographs and video) were submitted to the Council about ways to build on our heritage, and to foster economic, social and cultural development – boosting attractiveness as a place to live, to work in, or visit as a tourist.
- This included a vision of Kilfenora recovering its position as a vibrant centre of activity in the area of North Clare inside the Wild Atlantic Way.

The outcome was a promise to support Kilfenora, provided the village formed a representative group capable of managing projects, and applying for and managing grant money.

### **Kilfenora Development action group**

Accordingly an action group and consultative panel have been formed reflecting virtually all of the interest groups in Kilfenora – farming, retail, employment, tourism, sport, culture, music, accommodation, different age groups and the Noughaval and Inchovea areas – including specific entities such as the Burren Centre, Deanery, GAA, IFA, Comhaltas, Kilfenora Céilí Band, Kilfenora Timeline volunteers, Community Hall and School.

The action group will operate under the name Kilfenora Development, and a not-for-profit company (limited by guarantee) has been formed that allows us to handle grant money.

As recommended by the Council, we will adopt this operating structure, much of which is already in place following consultative efforts in recent weeks.

- A core action group to co-ordinate action and act as a focal point to promote Kilfenora's interests (and its members already represent most aspects of the community)
- A fixed 'involvement' panel – to include any interest group that is not already represented in the steering group, plus anyone else serving as an activity project leader; for example, the Kilfenora Heritage Association, Fr Ned Crosby and Rev Kevin O'Brien (Col), the School Principal and a number of volunteers for project work
- Contact mailing lists (primarily email, Whatsapp) for anyone in the community who wishes to be consulted and contribute ideas; for example we intend to include various Whatsapp groups representing youth, young mothers etc.

We expect fluidity over time, as volunteers get involved and fresh blood joins the steering group and involvement panel. A website will be created ([www.kilfenoradev.ie](http://www.kilfenoradev.ie)) to serve as a platform for information-sharing, involvement and promotion. This will work collaboratively with the village website ([www.kilfenoraclare.com](http://www.kilfenoraclare.com)) and Kilfenora Online facebook page, as well as other websites and facebook pages maintained by village entities, and with the Burren Ecotourism Network.

Members (volunteers) of the initial steering group are Michael Collins, John O’Gorman, John Morgan, Stephen Hegarty, Mary Pegg, Andy Lambert, Dena McGrath, Paul Carkill and Edel Barry.

### **Building on previous work, embracing ideas**

Kilfenora Development will build on the efforts of the Kilfenora Planning Group and the consultation it conducted in 2018, plus the work of Kilfenora Timeline, but also other regeneration ideas that have emerged since - in the village, in the Council and in the Burren Ecotourism network.

- Clare CoCo have committed to work with Kilfenora Development on a strategic plan for the village and improvements in signage, facilities and village appearance. Our intention is also to influence emerging Fáilte Ireland plans for promoting and enhancing tourism in the Burren area.
- The action group has started working on grants being offered by Clare CoCo under the Community Support Scheme 2021, such as for improving public amenities and village appearance, community wifi, community development and physical activities.
- We have also reached agreement with the Church of Ireland that the Cathedral will be re-opened for community use, visitors, the Timeline exhibition and activities such as concerts. We are facilitating a grant application by the Col for some repair work to ensure it is fit for visitors. The Burren Centre plans to offer village tours in the tourist season, as part of publicising Kilfenora’s historic features, especially the Cathedral, Crosses and Holy Well.

We will communicate and consult on this work as it progresses, especially as clear project proposals get developed, in which we intend to involve community members directly. (Note our email address – [info@kilfenoradev.ie](mailto:info@kilfenoradev.ie))

In the meantime, if you have any queries, do talk to any member of the action group.

***Up Kilfenora!***