



KILLEIGH COMMUNITY CENTRE DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (KCCDA)

The village of Killeigh, located 5 miles from Tullamore is a place many will pass through on the way to Portlaoise but which has a rich and varied history, ready to be uncovered. The beautiful village green was the site of the famous Killeigh Sports on August Monday for many years from the late 19th century to the 1960's. The statue of local legend Mick the Miller on the green tells the story of a local greyhound who went on to have a successful career in greyhound racing in the 1920's and 1930's and even had a film made about his life! In the current times, Killeigh has a thriving school, along with a church, pub, hairdresser, and shop. There is a strong farming sector in the area, with a number of large holdings, reflecting the fertile and productive land in the area.

The village is of archaeological and historic interest due to its proud monastic tradition in medieval times, reflected in the local abbey, and many artefacts located around the village and environs. Sporting tastes are catered for by the local GAA club, camogie club, and there is a successful school boys and school girls soccer club. They have recently opened a new grounds, and are developing their facilities at present. There is a successful local golf society, and many locals have joined local athletics clubs.

Macra Hall

Killeigh had a very successful and forward looking club from the late 1940's to the early 1970's, who wanted to provide a permanent hall for their meetings and functions, and for the local community. Killeigh Hall on the outskirts of the village, cost £8,000 sterling, and was designed by local engineer, Pat Walsh RIP, and was built by mainly local labour. Keenan Bros. Bagenalstown supplied the roof. The hall opened in November 1965, by Hugh Ryan President of Macra Na Feirme. From the late 1950's a carnival was held in a marquee situated in a field beside the green, during the last week in July, ending on the August Bank Holiday, coinciding with Killeigh Sports. A local Electric Picnic! The week long carnival was a major fundraiser for the club, featuring many noted bands in its heyday, and attracted large crowds from all over the Midlands. The carnival moved to the hall site for a number of years, but ceased in the late 1960's.

Killeigh Hall held many county and national Macra competitions, and with its maple floor, and modern facilities at the time, was a venue drawing large crowds from the Midlands and beyond. It was reputed to be a place where many couples met, who went on to tie the knot. A Midlands Ballroom of Romance.

The National Final of the Queen of the Land was held in Killeigh for many years, until moving to its present location, the larger Bridge House Hotel in Tullamore. The local Senior Citizens was also held

in the hall for many years. Monday nights was Bingo night in Killeigh for a number of years, and for the sporting inclined, there was a local badminton club. A number of auctions were held in the hall, as well as meetings of local groups and clubs, including the youth club.

Sadly with the decline of the local Macra club in the 1970's, and in line with a general move nationally to towns offering bar and catering services, use of the hall generally ceased.

The hall slowly deteriorated to its present run down state.

The 1950's and '60's were a time of change in Ireland with a move from a primarily agricultural based economy to one also including employment in manufacturing and industry. This sign of improved circumstances saw the development of a local group water scheme at this time through a local committee, including local parish priest Fr. Dan Kennedy. The scheme was a major advance, and provided running water and bathroom facilities for the community. The scheme is still in existence, and is one of the largest in Ireland.



Killeigh Community Centre Development Association CLG (KCCDA.)

In late 2017, a number of public meetings were held in the local school to discuss the future development of Killeigh Hall. A committee was formed at a meeting on 5th December 2017 to develop the hall as a Community Centre. The original officers were.

Joe Walsh Chairperson, Maria Bannon Secretary, Gerard Cleary Treasurer, and Martina Gorman PRO.

Following legal advice the committee formed a company limited by guarantee, KCCDA in February 2018. The committee had 4 key objectives to secure the provision of a Community Centre for the people of Killeigh, and surrounding area:

1 Ownership.

This involved meeting with the 5 hall Trustees, and the 2 adjacent landowners, who owned small portions of the hall site. Following discussions with the respective parties, and their legal advisers, from 2018 onwards, the transfer of the hall was secured in late August 2020. This was a major achievement, and we thank the Trustees, and other parties for their cooperation in finalising the transfer.

2 Fundraising.

We set up a fundraising committee, dedicated to raising funds for the project. The committee have worked tirelessly, and have raised €130,000 to date. Fundraising began with a church gate collection, followed by a bag packing day in Dunne's Stores. In April 2018, an enjoyable and successful American Tea Party was held in Clonaslee Community Centre.

We held a successful Family Fun day on the June Bank Holiday 2018, repeated in 2019. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic this year's event was cancelled. We hope to resume in 2021, provided it is safe to do so. In the summer and autumn of 2018, local people practised their dance steps, for a hugely

enjoyable, and profitable Jigs'N' Reels event in November of that year, held in The Tullamore Court Hotel. Local couples from the community put on their best dancing steps to impress the judges. The event drew a large crowd on the night, and realised almost €40,000 for the project.

In 2019 committee members had a stand at the National Ploughing Championships in Carlow, selling tickets for a garden shed. An enjoyable 3 days was held by all who took part, and local musicians and dancers provided entertainment for the crowds.

In November/December last year we commenced our major fundraising initiative, the Patrons' Scheme, calling to householders in the Killeigh area asking them to become a Patron, or if that proved onerous, they could make a smaller donation.

We had planned to resume calling to houses in February and March, but the corona virus lock down caused us to pause the Patron's Scheme.

In January and February this year, the fundraising group organised a transformation operation event culminating with a walk/run or jog in late February.

During lock-down the fundraising group and Local photographer, Paula Nolan came up with some innovative ways of raising money. Paula took a number of beautiful photographs of the village, and also called to householders taking doorstep portraits of the owner's property, who made a donation to community centre funds. A **"Go-Fund Me"** page for donors was set up on line, and is still taking contributions. A draw was held for a signed Liverpool jersey in honour of the club winning the 2019 champions league. In May a 2k a day was arranged, those taking part would walk 2k for community

centre funds.



We have been in contact with Offaly Leader since the group was formed, and are awaiting confirmation of funding. The committee have applied to Offaly County Council for funding under the Towns and Villages Renewal Scheme, and received a positive response.

3. Planning

Architects Mc Carthy O'Hora and Partners, Portlaoise, were engaged by the committee to design and cost a plan for the hall. They also carried out a feasibility study, which recommended developing the Macra Hall, as the best location for a community centre. The committee set up a building subcommittee to deal with the planning process, and this group are in contact with the architects and planners, reporting back to the main committee.

The committee decided to go with a 2 phase plan developing and refurbishing the hall as a Community Centre. After completing the first phase, we will consider proceeding to the next phase taking into account local needs and requirements. A development over 2 to 3 years was agreed, as

we thought a longer phased development might result in the community losing interest. Planning application was submitted in April, we supplied further information requested by the planning authority in September. We are confident our application will be approved by the planners. Work has recently commenced on the procurement and tendering process.

4. Communications

We realise that good communication was vital for the development plans to meet the needs of the local community. In Autumn 2018 the committee carried out a community needs survey, and the overwhelming response was that Killeigh needed a community centre, for use by all ages and groups.

We also liaised with other community groups who had developed similar community centres. We avail of local press and media including social media to keep people informed of progress with the development.

The future is bright for Killeigh!

We hope that all things going well, the building phase will commence in 2021, and the dream of providing a modern community centre in Killeigh will be realised. This will involve major refurbishment and change to the hall in line with modern standards.

The hall will be used for all age groups from the young to senior citizens, and will be available for use by local clubs and societies for meetings, exercise and general use. The hall can be used as a 'hot desk' for people working from home in the current pandemic. Training on computers and Internet training is another option on this world of modern communications.

The hall can also be used to provide light refreshments after local funerals, and as a place catering for local sports teams who reach finals in their respective sports.

