BWRA NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALLINACURRA WESTON RESIDENTS' ALLIANCE

COMMUNITY ELECTIONS NOW!

NEW POLICY DOCUMENT LAUNCHED IN UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK

The Ballinacurra Weston Residents' Alliance is calling for the holding of community elections that will elect residents onto a local regeneration board with decision-making powers on which all the stakeholders would be fairly represented.

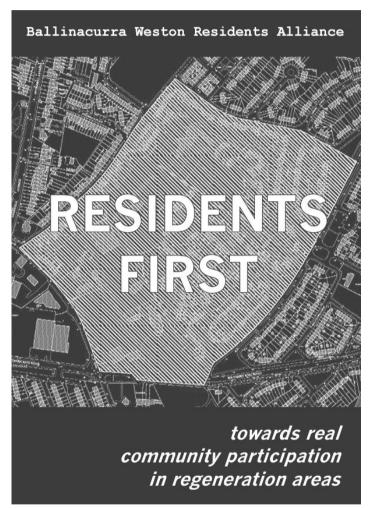
Such structures are possible and have proven successful in other areas, such as Fatima Mansions in Dublin and Cranmore in Sligo. These communities have demonstrated that true partnership is not only achievable, but also necessary to a successful outcome, especially where social regeneration is concerned.

"The so-called residents forum is a bad joke; most of its members are non-residents that don't represent our best interests. We want a regeneration that is centred on community needs and we need a regeneration that puts residents first. Our calls for empowerment and real participation are more than just demands; they are our human rights and they are being trampled on" said Matt Collins, Chairperson of the BWRA.

With this in mind, the BWRA, in association with Limerick Regeneration Watch, launched 'Residents First-towards real community participation in regeneration areas' at a 3-day conference in the University of Limerick entitled 'Renewing Local Democracy Through Civic Engagement'.

This summer school, organised by UL's Department of Politics and Public Administration, ran from 13th - 15th June and was well attended by over 100 participants. Many of the lectures and workshops were about community participation and participants were invited to bring along material for display to highlight their own initiatives and activities.

"I was originally invited to participate in the Community Circle on day-three of the school; *'Listening and Hearing - Experiences of Community Engagement'*, and had hoped to bring attention to our new publication, *Residents First*" said Cathal McCarthy, Chairperson of Limerick Regeneration Watch and PRO with the BWRA



Residents First is online at www.limerickregeneration.org Printed copies of the document are available on request.

"But then an invitation was issued to all members of Our Lady of Lourdes Umbrella Group to attend the school and quite a few of us jumped at the chance" added Mr. McCarthy, who is also treasurer of the Umbrella Group.

"We had originally intended to launch *Residents First* on the 25th of June to coincide with the 4th anniversary of Brendan Kenny's appointment as CEO of the Limerick Regeneration Agencies but the summer school was the perfect venue, especially with the Minister for Environment, Phil Hogan TD, opening the school. The Ministers opening address gave me hope that things will be different under his watch, that change is in the air and we might finally be listened to." said Mr. Collins. ...contd overleaf

The theme of Day 2 was 'Public Participation and Planning' and the opening lecture by Ciaran Lynch of the *Tipperary Institute*, whose topic of 'Public Participation in Planning in Ireland' was fascinating and insightful, detailing the various types of community participation from 'best practice' to the 'fraudulent'. This was followed by a Workshop - Planning for Community and Area Regeneration, with presentations from Mike Scannell of Tralee Town Council - 'Urban Regeneration in Tralee' and Declan Blackett of the Limerick Regeneration Agencies - 'Participation in Limerick Regeneration'

IT'S BETTER IN TRALEE

"The difference in approach of Tralee Town Council to regeneration and their treatment of residents when compared to their counterparts in Limerick was a real eye-opener. I had to refer back to that mornings lecture, which described the kind of approach to community participation that we have in Limerick regeneration areas as fraudulent." said Mr. McCarthy.

"In Tralee, if you're a homeowner and they want to knock your home, 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, its deeds for deeds in Tralee. Here in Limerick you're given €35,000 for your home and turned into a tenant, never to return", said Mr. Collins "And in Tralee, residents were also given the option of refurbishment and this was done in some areas. Here in Limerick the decisions are being made for us without even consulting properly with residents" he concluded.

TAOISEACH WELCOMES PROPOSAL

Residents First was sent to all Limerick City Councillors and TD's, all members of the Cabinet and leading members of the opposition. It is hoped that it will act as a catalyst for change in the way that the Limerick Regeneration Agencies engages with the communities under their remit.

"We didn't get a chance to meet Phil Hogan at the Summer School, but we did present a copy of *Residents First* to Willie Penrose TD, the Minister for Housing, when he visited Our Lady of Lourdes Action Centre recently, he said he'd take the time to read it, hopefully so will his colleagues". said Mr. McCarthy.

"So far, the feed back from the politicians has been very positive. We got a letter from the office of An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD, welcoming *Residents First* and wishing us well with our campaign. And Kieran O'Donnell TD gave me a call to offer his support," said Mr. Collins

FICTIONAL FACTIONS

In a recent article in the *Limerick Leader*, which avoided mentioning *Residents First* and our call for community elections, Mr. Brendan Hayden of the Regeneration Agency said "we have a difficult enough job to do in the current climate in getting funding for projects without having factions forming and the community divided"

The BWRA is not a faction; it is the only active organisation in the area that is run by the residents and for the residents and Mr. Hayden is well aware of that.

PENROSE POPS IN



On the 24th of June the Minister for Housing, Willie Penrose TD, paid a flying visit to Our Lady of Lourdes Community Centre. the above photo is taken from the residents forum new blog, which can be found at: www.residentsforum.wordpress.com

If a picture speaks a thousand words then the following caption that accompanied the photo says it all. "Members of the Forum were happy to meet with the Minister and share with him about their hopes and concerns about the regeneration process in our area."

Pictured with the Minister are non-residents Declan Blackett of the Regeneration Agency and Katherine Kirby of Local Estate Management. In fact, residents were thin on the ground to welcome the Minister and only one of them was a member of the forum.

The Minister is however, holding a copy of *Residents First* as the BWRA was informed of the Ministers visit less than 5-minutes beforehand and Matt and Cathal got there in time to present him with a copy.

This comment could not be posted on the forums blog because, just like the structures of the Agency's forum, the online version also gives you the right to be ignored. At the very least a forum should be a place of debate where all opinions can be aired. To this end the BWRA have started our own blog where comments can be posted and where honest criticism is accepted.

www.bwra.blogspot.com

"It's ridiculous to say that the community is divided. A survey carried out by the BWRA last year found that nearly 95% of residents didn't trust the Regeneration Agency, that's a fairly united view," said Mr. Collins

Of the residents forum Mr. Hayden said that it was only natural that the Agency would "show a certain amount of loyalty to people that have stuck with us for the last three to four years".

"Mr. Hayden's loyalty should be to the whole community and not just the handful of individuals that will toe the Agency line. Those few residents that remain on the forum serve only one purpose: to prop up the illusion that the Agencies are engaging with the communities in a meaningful way. It's nothing short of fraudulent. Mr. Hayden was presented with a copy of *Residents First* and our door is always open if he wants to discuss holding elections and power-sharing. Real participation and true partnership is the only way forward," said Mr. McCarthy.

SURVEY EXPOSES FRAUDULENT ENGAGEMENT

In 2010 the BWRA conducted a survey to find out residents views on regeneration. Many told us that it was their first real consultation. There were 179 respondents to the survey and 12 refusals. Every door was knocked on and those that were out when we called were re-visited. We asked each household to nominate one person to complete the survey. Thirteen questions in all were asked.

60% of those surveyed were in favour of the 'Master Plans' but when given the option of refurbishment over demolition nearly 74% chose refurbishment and those that favoured demolition made it clear that they wanted the same neighbours. 87% favoured the refurbishment of Our Lady's Grotto, yet in the 'Master Plans' it would be demolished. This proves the lack of consultation and

a) Yes 21.6%

a) Yes 18.4%

a) Yes 4.8%

a) Yes 5.6%

b) No 78.4%

b) No 81.6%

b) No 95.2%

b) No 94.4%

Q13. Would you like Our Lady's Grotto in Cercora / Clarina Avenue?

Q11. Are you happy to wait 10 – 15 years for regeneration?

Q12. Would you prefer to have your home?

a) Demolished 0.5% b) Moved 12%

a) Demolished 26.4% b) Refurbished 73.6%

Q9. Do you know which residents represent your area on the forum?

Q10. Do you think residents' are treated fairly by the Council / Agency when been relocated?

c) Refurbished 87.5%

'Master Plans', 78% were unaware of the existence of the forum, the mechanism by which consultation was supposed to take place, and 81% were unaware of who represented them on the forum. A staggering 94.4% said that they did not trust the Southside Regeneration Agency.

Our survey highlights the failure of the existing structures for community participation and the urgent need for change. The residents representatives that we met in Fatima Mansions told us that they had spent five years fighting with Brendan Kenny and Dublin City Council before the establishment of a local regeneration board that shared power with residents in making decisions on what happened in their area. If regeneration is to do 'exactly what is says on the tin', then similar structures need to be such n and date.

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CHURCH LANE PROPOSAL APPROVED

In January 2011, Sergeant Martin O'Sullivan of Roxboro Garda Station contacted the Chairperson of the Ballinacurra Weston Residents' Alliance (BWRA), Matt Collins, with a request that the BWRA start a petition to extinguish the right-of-way between Beechgrove Avenue and Our Lady of Lourdes Church / Childers Road.

Sergeant O'Sullivan told Matt that the Gardaí were experiencing a lot of problems at night with youths engaged in 'joy' riding and other anti-social activities using the right-of way as an escape route when pursued by the Gardaí.

Indeed, there were other problems with the laneway in question, with youths congregating at night to drink, take drugs and torment residents for their own entertainment. A number of residents had expressed to us that they found the situation intolerable and felt like moving out.

The laneway was also used to illegally dump rubbish in back gardens of derelict council-owned properties and in the laneway itself. Matt agreed to take Sergeant O'Sullivan's request to our Committee for further discussion.

Our Committee discussed the matter at length. It was felt that simply extinguishing the right-of-way would not eliminate all of the problems; it would also deny use of the right-of way to legitimate pedestrians because of the actions of a minority. It was agreed that we should first consult with the residents of Beechgrove Avenue to find out how they felt about any proposed extinguishment. Opinion regarding extinguishment of the right-of-way was divided so we presented residents with an alternative proposal, which was well received.

Our next port of call was a visit to Fr. Damien Ryan, the Parish Priest of Our Lady of Lourdes. Matt and our PRO, Cathal McCarthy, visited Fr. Ryan on 7th February 2011 and outlined the BWRA's proposal to him. Fr. Ryan informed them of the ongoing problems he has with youths gathering at the Church at night to drink alcohol. He told Matt and Cathal that mass goers had been stoned by such youths and that he himself had bottles and stones thrown at him when he asked them to move on and while he welcomed our proposal he felt that youths would continue to gather in front of the church.

On learning of Fr. Ryan's difficulties we revised our plans before submitting them to Limerick City Council, the Southside Regeneration Agency and every household in Beechgrove Avenue. Our proposal recommended that the following works be carried out:

- Demolition of Existing Boundary Wall
- Day Time Only Access
- Installation of Bollards
- Installation of Street Lighting

We got a letter from City Manager, Tom Mackey, saying that he would be happy to forward our proposals, and messages of support from City Councillors. Unfortunately, there was no reply from the Regeneration Agency, so we were unsure if work could proceed without their support; as the area where the proposed works need to be carried out is in the legal remit of the Regeneration Agency we had proposed that funding should be available from their Social Inclusion Minor Capital Projects funds. Expenditure on such projects is defined by the Regeneration Agency as follows:



Above: Architects drawings from our Church Lane proposal. which is available for viewing online at www.limerickregeneration.org

"Minor Capital Project Expenditure involves General Estate upkeep and other Physical Works required to maintain a reasonable quality of life and environment for residents while awaiting the Regeneration Programme to be implemented fully."

The news that work would start was a joy to the residents of Beechgrove. Seeing the wall demolished was a small victory for the community. Our thanks to Fr. Ryan for his support, to Mayor Jim Long for proposing it to Limerick City Council and the Southside Regeneration Agency for funding the work.

KIERAN HANGS OUT



Stephen Corbett, Angela Collins, Kieran O'Donnell TD, Matt Collins and Cathal McCarthy. Kieran visited the area in May at the invitation of the BWRA and accompanied us on a walkabout of the area.

Kieran made representations on our behalf and within hours of his visit green sites that are the responsibility of the Agency but hadn't been tended to in two years were cut and houses that were boarded-up and causing serious problems for residents have now been knocked. Smiths Demolition told Matt that they were instructed to stop what ever they were doing and come and cut the grass immediately. Three weeks later and Smiths Demolition were back to knock the houses and thank the BWRA. for pushing for the work to be done. There's plenty more to be done and we'll be pushing for that as well. Our thanks to Kieran for his assistance.

Eye's Down...it's Bingo Time!



Our Lady of Lourdes bingo is finally up and running, thanks to the hard work of our community volunteer committee, which comprises of Chairperson: Helen Ring, Secretary: Mary Timmons, Treasurer: Susan Williams. Angela Collins, Matt Collins, Shane Stewart, Breda Phillips, Cathal McCarthy and Ronald Collins.

The plan for Bingo took a long time to put into action but we are now up and running for the last few months and has been very well received by the people of Our Lady of Lourdes parish. It has become a great social event for all. The success of the bingo is down to the hard work of our volunteers. The committee would like to take this opportunity to thank Breda, Christy and Pa for all the work they do every week in getting the hall ready for bingo. Well done to Breda for stepping in at a minutes notice and doing a great job at calling the numbers. A big thank you goes to the B.W.R.A for providing the front of house security. A special thanks goes to Jimmy Prior for calling the numbers and for giving us lots of advice in setting up, to Kay Flanagan for getting us organised as a group and to Cathal McCarthy Snr. for help in organising our accounts. We would also like to thank our sponsors the Matching Parish Grants scheme, the Southside Regeneration Agency, Limerick City Council, Spar Green Park, the Sit'N'Sip Cafe and the Meat Market Roxboro. We would also like to thank Our Lady of Lourdes Community Centre for the use of the hall. We hope to have continued success and to let people know that all are welcome. As you can see from the photos an enjoyable night is had by all, young and old. Looking forward to your continued support in the future, hoping to see you all there on Monday nights at 8.30pm. – Susan Williams



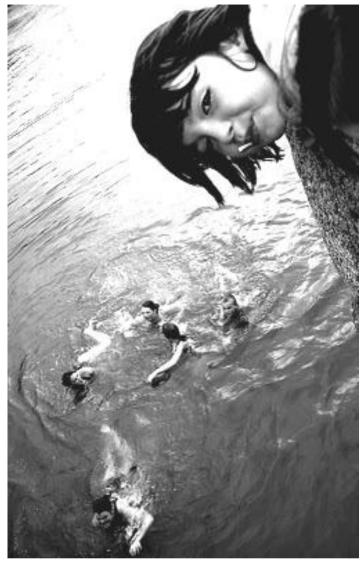




Community Bingo is on Monday Night's @ 8.30pm in Our Lady of Lourdes Community Centre

BALLYCOTTON FOREVER!





For them as don't already know, there is a bit of a phenomena in Limerick by the name of Anne Curley and better known as 'Curley'. She runs one of the more chaotically organised thrift shops in Limerick, a place called 'Second-Time Round' on Wickham St. With the proceeds of 'Second-Time Round' she runs a holiday home in Ballyandreen, Co.Cork.

The kids all call it; 'Ballycotton', after the name of the nearest town, and so do I and so does Curley. I've been going there for seven years now, and it ain't easy, but the craic to be had is none of your oul' normal craic that you wouldn't bother sayin' hello twice to, oh no. The Ballycotton craic is the topnotch stuff.

So there you have it, a few weeks out of the year down by the seaside. We swim every day, we go on long walks every day, we eat sandwiches on the beach every day, we do our jobs every day and we eat plenty of wholesome food whether we like it or not because Curley has rules about these sort of things. The beach is really close and also really rocky. It's not the long white sandy number that you think of when you hear the word 'beach'. When the tide is in, it's pebbles and rocks

only. But you don't mind that when you're down in Ballycotton. There's a whole different set-up in Ballycotton. For me, I can only describe it as the nearest thing to the 1950's summer holiday you can get. The entertainment seems pretty slim by the standards of today's generation; No Telly, No Interweb, No phone coverage, No videogames.

All you can do is *be* there, and yet strangely that always seems to be enough. Corned beef sandwiches, diluted orange and Mrs McCarthy's Fruit Cake on the beach. Every day. Walking 'over the mountains' – past the Sheep's head, past the wooden bridge, past the savage cabbages, past the water-you-can-drink, and past the lecktrick fence, and past the concrete box and past the picnic tables and into Ballycotton town, to spend your euro – if you haven't been 'docked'. You can jump off the pier if Curley reckons you're a strong enough swimmer. You can fish off the pier if you have a rod or a handline. Any fish caught will be cleaned and gutted and eaten as near to catching as possible. There is nothing as lovely as a fresh mackerel fried and seasoned with a bit of lemon. It's 'UNHUMAN!'

- Darren Maher

Ballycotton will run from the 2nd of August with four one-week holidays. Curley will be calling door-to-door with application forms. For more information contact Curley at: 085 16 25 889

THERE'S A HORSE OUTSIDE!



The view from CDP House has much improved thanks to the artwork of their new neighbours in No. 48 Clarina Court, the Rosbrien School Completion Programme (SCP). Limerick City Council provided the house to the SCP and its refurbishment was funded by the Regeneration Agency. The murals outside were painted by local youths working with the SCP's Samantha Kiely, Martin Collins, Deirdre White and Joanna Malone, with help and advice from residents Cathal McCarthy and Cindy Fogarty of the Simpsons mural fame. The realistic mural of the Shetland pony has caught a few people off guard, but don't worry this one won't wander off or get taken by the pound.

BWRA HOLDS OPEN MEETINGS



Attending the weekly BWRA committee meeting in CDP House, 49 Clarina Court on 24th May, were (L-R) Stephen Corbett, Matt Collins (Chair), Angela Collins (Treasurer), Cathal McCarthy (PRO), Biddy Collins, Anne Martin and Tony Butterfield.

The BWRA meets every Tuesday at 4pm. Meetings have been suspended for the month of August and will resume on Tuesday 6th September. These meetings are open to all members to attend.

The BWRA takes its name and draws it membership from the designated regeneration area of *Ballinacurra Weston (parts of)*, which includes parts of Weston, Prospect and Rosbrien. If you received this newsletter through your letterbox then you live in the regeneration area of *Ballinacurra Weston (parts of)*, which includes Donnellan's Buildings, Ryans Cottages, Weston Villas and Punches Close.

We welcome new members and if you would like to be involved with the work that we do then we would love to have your input and assistance.

For further information contact:

Matt Collins (Chairperson): 087 65 77 063 Martin Woodland (Secretary): 087 28 74 924 Cathal McCarthy (PRO): 087 784 50 70

Post: Chairperson, BWRA, c/o 24 Clarina Avenue,

Ballinacurra Weston, Limerick.

E-Mail: WestonAlliance@gmail.com

OUR LADY OF LOURDES UMBRELLA GROUP

The BWRA is a member of OLOL Umbrella Group, which is made up of representatives from the various community and voluntary groups in the parish. The Umbrella Group is seeking to become a unified voice for the parish and 26 parish-based organisations are members so far.

OLOL Umbrella Group Committee: Susan Williams (Chairperson), Kevin O'Dwyer (Vice-Chair), Cathal McCarthy (Treasurer) and Matt Collins (Vice-Treasurer).

IT'S RAPID SHAM

Congratulations to our Chairperson, Matt Collins, on being elected by the Umbrella Group as the *RAPID* rep for Our Lady of Lourdes Parish. *RAPID* stands for Revitalising Areas by Planning Investment and Development and is aimed a improving the quality of life and the opportunity available to residents. Matt is the first resident from Our Lady of Lourdes to take on the role in over seven years.

COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY FORUM

Congratulations to our PRO, Cathal McCarthy, on being elected by the Umbrella Group as the Community & Voluntary Forum rep for Our Lady of Lourdes Parish. Cathal represents the Weston Gardens Residents' Association (WGRA) on the Umbrella Group and we're sure he'll do a great job representing the parish.

PARISH MATCHING MIX UP

Last year, the BWRA encouraged it's members to apply for the *Stronger Together* Parish Matching Grants Scheme that was being piloted in the parish by Cormac Russell of *Nurture Development*. Most of our 13 applications were complementary; beautification and environmental projects to do murals, start a Memory Garden and restore Our Lady's Grotto. Because of this, it was agreed to combine the projects into one grant of €2,000. Atlantic Philanthropies and the Regeneration Agency equally fund the scheme, which is managed by Neil Haran and Martin Galvin of the University of Limerick's office in the LEDP. It was agreed that the money would be made available through St. Bernadette's Credit Union.

All of the work to improve the appearance of our community was outdoors work, so it was agreed that work would start in April. As one of the sites identified for a mural project had been demolished the BWRA offered to supply the paint for the SCP murals due to start in April, but when we went to draw the money down it wasn't there.

When we asked where the money was gone we were told that the Regeneration Agency had objected to the BWRA getting it. We contacted Cormac Russell and suggested that either the Agency could keep it's half of the money or that the Umbrella Group might be used to draw down the funds. The Regeneration Agency chose the second option and a letter of confirmation, conditions and congratulations was sent to the Umbrella Group. Members were surprised to learn that the Umbrella Group had been awarded money that it didn't apply for, but once the situation was explained it was agreed that the BWRA would take charge of the funds. Work will now begin in mid August.

Save Our Lady of Weston



The ongoing desecration of Our Lady's statue and grotto in Crecora/Clarina Avenue reflects badly on our community and cannot be allowed to continue.

Our Lady's hands have been vandalised and obscene pictures have been drawn on her torso. Horses are grazed in the grotto and grass cuttings and manure have been dumped over the walls. It is a source of great shame for the majority of residents. Something needs to be done.

The Parish Matching Grants Scheme has made money available to restore the grotto, as this is what many residents had applied for last year. However, an incident that involved youths from outside the area trying to dislodge the statue and throwing stones and debris from the grotto at homes, passers by and children playing in their gardens, has led some residents to believe that there is no point in restoring Our Lady of Weston as she will only fall victim to such desecration again. It has been suggested that Our Lady's statue should moved to the proposed Senior Citizens Garden behind the Community Centre.

Because of this division of opinion, the BWRA will be going door to door to the homes where the grotto is visible from and asking residents to sign up to one or the other options.

Option 1: Residents will sign up to working on the restoration project and establish a committee to oversee its maintenance.

Option 2: Residents will sign a petition to have Our Lady's statue moved for her own safety to the proposed Senior Citizens Garden behind the Community Centre.

However, there may be a third option. As we understand it, Local Estate Management has been given funds by Limerick City Council to pay for the restoration work to be done. If this is the case then it is welcome news, as it would end any doubts if the statue was left alone and residents wouldn't have wasted their efforts if Our Lady gets desecrated again.

BWRA INVITED TO COMPETE IN LIMERICK COMMUNITY CHALLENGE

As the recipient of an Environmental Grant of €1,000 from Limerick City Council, the BWRA has been invited to compete in the Limerick Community Challenge, which is funded by the J.P. McManus Charitable Foundation. The challenge is to demonstrate the particular improvement, which has been made as a result of community effort undertaken in 2011. The challenge has been accepted.

ALL-WEATHER PITCH SUBMISSION

The BWRA ran a postcard campaign and has made a submission to the Planning Department of Limerick City Council stating that the necessary infrastructure for sewage, plumbing and electrical supply need to be included in the pitch plans to accommodate the toilet, changing and storage facilities that the Regeneration Agency had promised to install after the pitch was complete. In January, the Regeneration Agency established a Community Pitch Management Group (CPMG) made up of members of the Umbrella Group. The purpose of the CPMG is to ensure the long-term sustainability of the pitch as a community resource.

The Agency met with the CPMG for months and agreed that temporary facilities would be provided while funding was being looked for. However, un-changed plans were submitted by the Agency without informing the group. This so-called consultation where we are listened to, agreed with and ultimately ignored, further highlights the failure of existing structures and the urgent need for change.

There was more bad behaviour from the Regeneration Agency when they ended the strong representation of Ballinacurra Weston on the CPMG, insisting that it needed to be more representative of the parish.

Apparently, it was okay to propose the demolition of Our Lady of Lourdes Church in the 'Master Plans' without providing a new one and without having consulted with the wider community of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, but when it comes to an all-weather pitch for the youth in the regeneration area of Ballinacurra Weston it's a different matter. Nuff said.

An Invitation To Residents

Thursday 18th August 11am – 1pm

Pery's Hotel, Glentworth Street

Residents are invited to share their experience of housing issues in their areas. The meeting will focus on both maintenance and regeneration and will provide information on using a rights based approach to housing issues

The meeting will be facilitated by the Community Action Network (CAN)

For further information or apologies please contact: Cecilia @ (01) 878 80 05 and Cathal @ 087 784 50 70 www.canaction.ie www.limerickregeneration.org