

Ballinacurra Weston Residents' Alliance

**Mr. Conn Murray,
Manager,
Limerick Local Authorities,
c/o**

24th September 2012

**City Hall,
Merchants Quay,
Limerick**

Dear Conn,

Firstly, on behalf of the Ballinacurra Weston Residents' Alliance' (BWRA) I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your recent appointment as manager of Limerick County & City Councils, bid you welcome and wish you well in the many challenges that you face in managing our great city.

We too face many challenges, as our Tidy Towns 2012 results points out:

"Ballinacurra Weston is facing serious challenges and your 'residents first' report makes sobering reading. Tidy Towns believes that constructive engagement with regional agencies should be encouraged as this can help you overcome difficult issues."

Engaging constructively with regional agencies is something that the BWRA is endeavouring to achieve since our formation in 2010. We welcomed the demise of the Regeneration Agencies and the opportunity that we now have to re-evaluate the structures for community participation, which to date has failed our regeneration communities abysmally.

'Residents First' is our policy document on community participation, we've enclosed a copy for your convenience and we urge you to read it and heed its recommendations.

We are not in the business in playing politics with our lives; we are not interested in trawling through the past to embarrass those that have failed us, but we do need to learn from those past mistakes.

It is regrettable that you recently announced that you met with the communities; the people you met are not representing the majority view, nor are they mandated to represent our area. We are.

We want to work constructively with Limerick City Council to salvage what we have and turn the situation around. To do that, the current structures for community participation have to change; we need to hold community elections to a localised regeneration power-sharing board, where residents are central to the decision making process.

The BWRA is working with the Community Action Network to develop a human rights based approach to regeneration. We are also working with other organisations in Limerick's regeneration areas such as the Moyross Residents' Alliance and the Carew Kincora Concerned Residents, we have recently given practical assistance to the Reclaim Project in Southill and the Wings of Heaven Garden in Moyross. We are working to rebuild community spirit and we would have greater success in this area if we could work in full partnership with Limerick City Council; our simple message to you is "work with us".

As our Tidy Town results pointed out:

"You are encouraged to work with Limerick city council and the Gardaí to combat illegal dumping...Ballinacurra Weston faces significant challenges but the number of community gardens and attractive homes shows that community spirit is alive"

Tidy Towns also pointed out that "Your main challenge is dereliction and this is something you acknowledge throughout your application form. Who do you liaise with on addressing this issue?"

Dereliction is an immediate threat to the health and safety of our residents and the dangerous houses need to be knocked as a matter of urgency; there is legislation already in place to facilitate this – namely The Derelict Sites Act, 1990 and the Local Government (Sanitary Services) Act, 1964. While we condemn those responsible for burning the houses, Limerick City Council cannot deny their complicity in all of this, as a clear pattern emerged at an early stage that the boarding up of houses ultimately lead to their being burnt-out.

It is the BWRA's sincere hope that you will engage with us constructively and that your recent statement in the Limerick Leader that you "want to empower communities to participate" was more than mere rhetoric – we've had our fill of that over the past 5-years. There are numerous instances in our community where residents are excluded from participating and we would hope to enlist your support in rectifying that.

We look forward to working with you

Yours sincerely,

Matt Collins,
Chairperson,
Ballinacurra Weston Residents Alliance
087 65 77 063
westonalliance@gmail.com