

Minutes of Newcastle Resident's AGM 24th November held by Zoom because of Covid 19 restrictions.

Welcome: Philip Mc Galey, Chairperson welcomed everybody to the meeting.

Present: Diana James, Niamh Becton, Craig Holmes, Michael Byrne, Derek Connolly, Gerard Sharma, Miriam Johnston, Michael Woodnutt, Brian Devereaux, Caroline Hill, Kim Harris, Cherry Sleeman, Lesley Abbott, Philip Mc Galey, Christelle David, Hugh O Rourke & Mary Woodnutt

Apologies. None

Minutes of AGM.

The minutes of the 2020 had been circulated and taken as read. There were no questions, so minutes were approved.

Financial Report.

Income and expenditure account for 2020 and comparisons with 2019 were shared by Hugh O Rourke on the screen. The surplus for 2020 was €2,489.00. The income was a total of €16,085.00 made up of donations, grants, and a bequest from the estate of the late Christine Kelly and we are incredibly grateful for that generous bequest. A total of €14,715.00 was received in grants from Wicklow Co Council, Greystones Municipal District Council and An Pobal. Of this €9,963.00 related to the town and village renewal scheme. These were used for the various big projects carried out during the year. We are very grateful for the grants and awards. The expenditure was €13,596.00. The main amount was €11,123.00 which was spent on projects conducted by the committee which were part of the town and village renewal scheme - the flower bed, the geophysical survey, the walkway and contributions towards the vegetable beds beside the Community Centre. The bank balance for the end of the year was €7,823.00. Hugh thanked WCC and Greystones Municipal district for their continued support. The current balance is €4,472.00. Approval of the financial accounts was proposed by Mary Woodnutt and seconded by Craig Holmes.

Chairman's Report.

2020 has been a year of contrasts. The full lockdown from January to May delayed many planned initiatives and resulted in the late announcement of the 2021 Tidy Towns Competition taking place. Judging this year placed an emphasis on the electronic entry with remote adjudication.

The results were announced on the 12th of November with Newcastle attaining a score of 319, a 7-point increase on 2019. However, we slipped a place in the Category B, being overtaken by Roundwood.

Once restrictions lifted work from the volunteers got going in earnest and their efforts can be seen right across the village including:

1. Planting of a 200m wildflower border along the L5050 as you enter the village
2. Installation of a Community Library Box.
3. Clearing, landscaping, and planting to the milestone opposite the tennis courts.
4. Painting benches and petrol pumps.
5. Planting of spring bulbs in the green areas throughout the village.
6. Installation of Flower Boxes on the bridge and flower barrels throughout the village.
7. Biodiversity focus on the Little Vartry.
8. Establishing a pollinator friendly environment by planting 125 fruit trees throughout the community.

In addition, the usual tasks of litter picking, maintenance and cleaning were tackled each week.

Planning

This year seen an increase in planning applications, and each were evaluated based on the effects on Newcastle and its residents and appropriate representations were made to the Council and An Bord Pleanala. There are two decisions current with the Bord, the 24m mast on Roberts Farm and the Lawn Field development.

Initiatives

Currently the committee are putting together a strategy for the area around the tennis courts and playground with a view to upgrading them and adding several additional facilities to benefit the entire community.

The biodiversity committee has undertaken a lot of work to increase awareness of the Little Vartry and the wildlife that inhabit its surroundings and are currently liaising with the relevant statutory bodies to avail of grants and expertise.

The feasibility of additional local heritage walks is being examined with a view to developing this resource in the near future.

Newcastle Village Forum

A discussion took place with Newtown Forum to understand the benefits of a similar structure being put in place for our Village.

Hugh O'Rourke suggested that the increase in marks in the Tidy Towns Competition was in large part due to Alex Calder for preparing the application for the tidy towns. The committee thanked her for her contribution.

Election of Officers.

Philip Mc Galey suggested that the Chairpersons role should run for two years. This was agreed. Philip put his name forward. Name was seconded by Mary Woodnutt.

Philip Mc Galey proposed Hugh O Rourke for treasurer role. This was seconded by Miriam Johnston.

Philip Mc Galey proposed Mary Woodnutt for Secretary role. Seconded by Craig Holmes.

AOB

Craig Holmes raised the question of the security, lighting and damage being done to the tennis courts and the nets and the goal posts. The gardai have been advised about the antisocial activity behind the community centre. The courts also badly need to be sanded. The council apparently are keen to do some work. Gerard Sharma to check with councillors as to their intensions. Jane Smith suggested getting in touch with Denise from WCC who is responsible for improving sports in the area. It was suggested that this whole area should be part of a new initiative suggested by Philip Mc Galey. It was also suggested that the new developers who are more than likely to start building in Newcastle could be approached to contribute to the amenities in the area.

The idea of the forum to include all the groups raised also at the NCC was discussed at length and it was agreed that the idea should be progressed at start of next year. The forum in Newtownmountkennedy is very successful. It would also facilitate looking for grants. Diana James suggested it would be easier to attract volunteers if it was clear where their skills would best be used. A councillor also sits at the forum in Newtownmountkennedy which would improve overall communications and viewpoint. The forum is not only for community groups, but businesses were also welcomed to join. Philip McGaley looked for volunteers to help set up the forum. Volunteers were Diana James, Jane Smith, Mary Woodnutt, Philip Mc Galey. Framework to be put in place and wide a group as possible be invited to ensure all involved. Email, posters, social media, and letter box drops to be used to spread the word. Noticeboard for the shop to be progressed with Watchorn's. Representative from the children of the village need to be involved.

