

Despite the challenges posed by Covid-19, all involved with Tramore Coastguard Cultural Centre are looking forward to a bright future

Continued from page 20

There had been plans to operate a Christmas shop at the Centre from mid-November onwards. Instead, it's now hoped that this shop can be opened when the current Covid-19 restrictions are lifted in early December.

Meanwhile, there are other exciting plans for Christmas which include lighting up this imposing building as well as the creation of a Dickensian style Christmas courtyard.

Development Trust

Chairperson of Tramore Development Trust Anne Harpur says their aim for Christmas is to give something back to the local community. This reflects the ethos of the Trust and their appreciation for ongoing community co-operation.

The Trust describes its role as "acting as a catalyst for change" and aims to work with stakeholders in Tramore "to utilise their assets for the benefit of our community and visitors." The community led voluntary organisation was formed in 2000 and is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status.

Their mission statement outlines the Trust's aim to "foster a vibrant heart within Tramore by encouraging social integration and by harnessing our resources, our people and our unique natural environment".

Among their key objectives is to bring functionality and sustainability to buildings which are no longer in use. The Development Trust manages the beautiful Lafcadio Hearn Japanese Gardens and completed the conversion and refurbishment of the former Friends Meeting House.

Celebrating 20 years in existence this year, Anne says the experience which the Trust's members have amassed during this time has helped them tackle the challenges posed by Covid-19.

"There is a fantastic team of committed people who love living in Tramore," she explains.

Anne says there was a determination to ensure the Trust's projects could continue operating at a time when such amenities are needed more than ever.

The Trust's members hope their plans for Christmas will provide a lift for the town, especially the Centre's eagerly awaited 'Star of Hope' light installation which will overlook the bay.

"It's so important that we have light during these times," says Anne. "This star can act as a central light source for Tramore and a beacon of hope."

She praised the 'Coastguard Creatives' and is heartened by



Relax and admire the panoramic views of Tramore Bay. PHOTO: COLIN SHANAHAN.

the "organic" growth of the group.

"There are so many gifted people in the area," she says.

Overall, Anne believes the success of the Centre showcases "the power of community" and she is

thrilled by its demographic diversity. "It's so healthy to have a gender, age and socio-economic mix," she adds.

Treasurer Louise Grubb is also delighted that so many different groups use the Centre, which she describes

as having a "very quirky atmosphere". She believes the vibrancy of the 'Coastguard Creatives' perfectly illustrates the positivity which exists.

Louise adds that local people are very proud of Tramore and she predicts that this



Marie Power (front) and Tanya Grinsell (back) with the friendly scarecrow which they created.



Pam Eustace serves a coffee to Colin O'Brien.

sentiment will increase.

"You could be in lockdown in a lot worse places!" she says.

Describing the Centre as a "hidden gem", Louise says many people are now waking up to what is on their own doorstep.

"This pandemic has brought the community closer together. You can really feel the sense of community," she says.

Positive future

Colin O'Brien believes the ongoing success of the Centre is a great news story during such a prolonged period of doom and gloom.

"Tramore offers so much and we've now come to appreciate going for walks within our 5km radius," he says.

Colin highlights the many different amenities which are accessible to people living in Tramore such as the Guillamene, the sand dunes, and the stunning Doneraile walk which offers direct access to the Centre.

He says the Centre diversifies Tramore's offering for both locals and visitors alike. However, with many people

still tending to gravitate towards the Promenade area, he believes the Centre can sometimes be unintentionally overlooked.

A native of Edinburgh, Colin moved to Tramore in October 2014 and was delighted to integrate into a community he describes as "very friendly, encouraging and enterprising".

It's abundantly clear that all involved with both the Tramore Coastguard Cultural Centre and the Tramore Development Trust have a huge passion for what they do and the area in which they live.

Their enthusiasm and proactive nature brings to mind another Irish seanfhocal: 'Tús maith leath na hoibre' or 'A good start is half the battle'. By seizing the initiative earlier this year, they have ensured they are well placed to weather the Covid-19 storm.

They are now also well positioned to continue making their admirable contributions to local community life.

"It's easy to give in but we have to keep looking forward," adds Colin. "I see the future as being great for Tramore."