

Irish Rural Link Annual Conference 2008

Rural Sustainable Communities—Rhetoric, Pipe Dream or Reality?

Irish Rural Link will hold our annual conference on the 15th and 16th of May 2008. *Please put this date to your diary!*

Our annual conference this year will take place in the Charleville Park Hotel, Charleville, Co. Cork. The conference which will focus on how communities can shape their own economic and social development will include a tour to the Ballyhoura Centre in Kilfinan and some of its projects.

For more information please contact **Maria** [at] IrishRuralLink.ie or **090 64 82744**

This year Irish Rural Link will travel to Ballyhoura Country, who will graciously host the Conference.

Programme Thursday 15th May

This year members will be offered the opportunity to enjoy the Ballyhoura Experience. On Thursday 15th May, following registration and lunch at the Charleville Park Hotel, participants will depart on a tour of the Ballyhoura area taking in a range of community programmes including;

- o **Food Units in Bruree**
- o **The Mountain Bike trails**
- o **Ardpatrick Community (Villages of Tradition)**
- o **The Heritage Hub, Friars Gate in Kilmallock**

Food Units in Bruree

The food units in Bruree are 5000sq. ft in total and consists of three food halls one 2000 sq.ft and two of 1500 sq.ft each. The food units were developed by a number of partners including Shannon Development, Limerick County Council, Limerick County Enterprise Board, Enterprise Ireland and Ballyhoura Development.

Currently there are two food companies located in Bruree, Co. Limerick in the food units.

1. **Alana Food Ingredients:**

- a. The owner Michael Walsh was head of the food ingredients in Golden Vale. He left Golden Vale in 2000 and set up Alana Food Ingredients in 2005.
- b. The products are spreads and toppings for breads.
- c. PMO/ Galberts are the main customer.
- d. Alana Food Ingredients is listed in Dunnes Stores and Superquinn.

2. **Global Fine Foods:**

- a. The owner Tom Coughlan worked for Dunnes Stores and then set up his own company.
 - b. The product is cooked hams.
 - c. Global Fine Foods sells through own brands in the major multiples.
- <http://www.ballyhouracountry.com/>

The Mountain Bike Trails

A unique opportunity to enjoy Ireland's outdoors by mountain bike has been announced in the Ballyhoura Mountains in East Limerick and North Cork. The development of the Ballyhoura Mountain Bike Centre will see a trail system being developed starting and finishing at a new trail head near the village of Ard Patrick in East Limerick. A full range of visitor services will be provided at the trail head such as car parking, bike wash, showers and toilets. Use of the trails will be free with small charges applying to the other visitor services provided.

The mountain bike trails will be the enthusiast bike riders dream with 3 world class trails, 91 km in total, of way marked routes using a combination of forest roads and new built single track trails. The trail system will be designed by the worlds leading trail designer Dafydd Davis who has designed some of the most exciting and challenging trails known to mountain bikers across the globe. There will be three trails in all with each of the circular loops offering a different experience, length and level of difficulty.

<http://www.ballyhouracountry.com/>

Ardpatrick Community – Villages of Tradition

Blackwater Resource Development and Ballyhoura Development Group are participating in an international network with villages in Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Italy. This network is being supported by EU funds through LEADER and is called '**Villages of Tradition**'. In the year 2000, the network has started an exchange program in order to bring the traditional rural villages within the LEADER regions into contact with one another.

Several objectives are sought jointly through transnational co-operation, such as:

- The promotion of quality tourist offer in traditional villages in different areas
 - The evaluation of endogenous potential of the regions, namely cultural and natural in order to render them available to the tourist demand
 - The financial support to the publication of booklets promoting and developing the product's image and label "Villages of Tradition"
 - The transfer of know-how, interchange of ideas and experiences in order to contribute to the network functioning
 - The promotion of traditional local products, namely food products and handicrafts, according to the common criteria of the different economic agents
 - The exchange of this perspective of social and economic development with other countries of the EU, sharing common objectives
 - The valorisation, consolidation and promotion of the local culture and the improvement of the population's self-esteem, facing new mentalities and new cultural values in a positive way
- The constitution of a European Economic Interest Group

<http://www.blackwater-resources.com/proginfo/VOT%20new/VillagesofTradition.html>

The Heritage Hub, Friars Gate

Ballyhoura has a wealth of heritage sites with great variety and depth. These include the ancient monuments of Lough Gur, castles and fortifications from almost every period of Irish history, a walled town, estates and mansions and attractive vernacular buildings and planned towns.

The Ballyhoura Heritage Information Centre takes all of these sites of interest and through the medium of art, interprets the sites. The centre also has a range of historical films of the area along with a small library of local interest.

A visit to the centre is stimulating, memorable and entertaining experience and is an ideal start point to explore the Slí Finn, Golden Vale and Ballyhoura Driving Routes.

The overall aim of the Ballyhoura Heritage Initiative is to provide an authentic rural heritage and cultural experience through delivering a holistic experience to visitors which will be achieved through visitor orientation and imaginative interpretative techniques, supported by integrated signage and a range of literature.

<http://www.friarsgate.ie/>

During the visit to each project time will be allowed for presentations from the group and question & answer session.

Friday 16th of May

9.30 Registration

10.00 Conference Opened by **Mr. Eamon O’Cuiv**,
Minister For Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs.

10.30 Panel Discussion

Chair: **Seamus Boland**, CEO of Irish Rural Link

Panel: **Kate Braitwaite**, Director of The Carnegie Commission for Rural Community
Development

Carmel Fox, CEO, Ballyhoura Development Ltd

Catherine Corcoran, Lecturer in Rural Development at the
Tipperary Institute

Denis Leamy, (incoming) CEO, Pobal

1pm Questions & Answers and Conference Outcomes
Seamus Boland and Niall Cussen

2pm: Annual Conference Ends

2pm: Light Lunch

<http://www.irishrurallink.ie/>