

# Fleadh leaves its mark with glorious mural



Ready to sail on the Bhoone with music from Mickey Murphy. Council Chairperson Cllr Michael Savage, Clive Price from Iur Cinn Fleadh Committee and Ciara O'Callaghan from Volunteer Now. R2236268



Fantastic session going on in the Iur Cinn Fleadh Street Feast in Newry Market. R22362272



Lively music from the Rooney Brothers and Ciara McCrackard in session in Cobble. R2236278

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**Two long years without cultural events were forgotten with a wonderful summer where the people of Newry and Mourne made up for the drought.**

Festivals and sunshine were the order

of the day and the dog days of August saw a hugely successful Iur Cinn Fleadh transform Newry. And an unmissable mural at the bottom of Canal Street left a legacy of colour and a message of love for all to enjoy.

Over 100 events and activities – mostly free – brought the people to the streets, the water and the various venues where plenty of fun was had. "It was absolutely fantastic," said Iur Cinn Fleadh organiser Columba O'Hare who was taking a well-earned break when he spoke to the *Newry Reporter*.



The mural at the end of Canal Street. R2236118



Call the musician - Healing people and communities, Tommy Sands Catherine Bescond Sands, Cllr Michael Savage, Maria Fibish and Bruce Victor along with Clive Price from the Fleadh Committee. R2236277

from his home in the aftermath.

## Bigger and better

"This year we had eight or 10 new events to the Fleadh and they were resounding successes. Maybe not some of them in numbers, but the fact that they were solid events that we can include next year and we can build and build on.

"For example, the Bikes and Beats on the Street had about 20 cyclists – people of all ages – and it was the best fun cycling around Newry with Ibiza-type soundtrack coming from a DJ and shouting and screaming your way through the town. There's no reason why there couldn't be hundreds in that next year."

And that was just one aspect with music on the street and in the pubs along with headliners the Sands Family and Matt McGinn.

"The musical acts were fantastic," said O'Hare.

"Somebody told me in the street they were great concert-goers and had been to the Rolling Stones, Paul Simon and all the big ones. And they told me that Matt McGinn concert was every bit as good as were all the rest of them."

"The volunteers from Volunteer Now were hugely helpful this year too, with such a small committee. Plus, we have new blood on the committee this year, which is great," said Columba.

Newry Water Festival got in on the act this year, as did the Festival of Windows where the aforementioned mural, painted by top street artists JMK aka Johnny McKerr and DMC aka Dermot McConaghy left its mark on the town.

## Picture of beauty

Along with the Iur Cinn Fleadh, the Festival of Windows is also part of Newry 2020 and member Garry McElheron explained that while the event is usually on in July, they decided to amalgamate with the Fleadh to make it bigger and better.

Garry described how the Festival of Windows began seven years ago.

"We wanted to have visual impact on the street. We asked all of the shops on Hill Street if we could put a piece of art in their window and 92 percent said yes," he explained.

"We got students' artwork from the Newry tech. We wanted to do street art and put murals on the walls back then, but we couldn't get permission for any walls."

The compromise was to get huge 8x8 foot boards and paint on them for display in the town.

The festival also hired street artists including JMK and DMC who painted some amazing work on these boards which are now stored in Garry's basement.

This year the vision of transforming the town began with the incredible mural painted on the side of Bertie and Noreen Flynn's house.

"The concept is simple," said Garry who knew the young boy depicted and got permission from his parents and him to use his image.

"That's why it's black and white because the original image was black and white. It kind of represents old but new, as it's a kid. The hand was done in colour so that was bringing in a bit more life. The idea of the t-shirt is one I've had for years. The brilliant thing was Bertie and Noreen allowed us to paint it on their wall in the first place. I was knocking doors a year or two ago, and they agreed. The funding fell through back then and it lay by the wayside and then Covid hit.

"We're trying to get more. We didn't have any, then we got Bertie which was brilliant. Conor McGinley – an artist from Rostrevor who has done a lot of

great work on Narnia in the village and other places – played a big part in the Festival of Windows over the years. He helped get the artists."

Garry hopes the boards from previous years won't be lying in storage for much longer. The Festival of Windows group is in discussion with the council to put them in the Newry Tunnels. And other plans are afoot for more murals to appear and cheer up the area – hopefully in the near future given the positive reaction from the public.

"Since the mural on the wall was done, we have two shops in Newry and one in Warrenpoint that we are hoping to do murals on," said Garry.

"Dundalk is up the road and they have them everywhere and they are phenomenal. They're all historical but all with modern twists, which is what we're looking to do too.

"I walk through Newry every morning on the way to work and I can see the transformation in the buildings, and it looks good, but there's no art. I'm seeing hundreds of potential murals on buildings everywhere I go. Funding is always a problem but we're hoping this catches the zeitgeist."

You can contact Festival of Windows at [info@newry2020.com](mailto:info@newry2020.com) if you want to provide or sponsor a wall for a mural



Singing outside Newry Town Hall Bláithín Mhic Cárna accompanied by Breandan O'Suilleabhain for the Walkers on the History Tour. R2236276



New event for Iur Cinn Fleadh and Seamus Mac Dhaibhéid taking a 'Hidden Hill Street' bilingual guided tour. R2236271

## Vet: Cost-of-living crisis leading to abandonment of kittens and pups

**More and more people are abandoning their pets and their litters as they struggle with the spiralling cost-of-living crisis, a Newry vet has warned.**

Liam Fitzsimons from Newry Veterinary Centre said there are growing cases of kittens and puppies being abandoned because people can no longer afford to feed them or pay for veterinary fees.

Four kittens were left outside the

Patrick Street vets in a cat box at 7.30am last Saturday morning.

Mr Fitzsimons said this is becoming a regular occurrence and said he is expecting to see numbers increase coming into winter.

"Pups and kittens are very hard to find a new home for at the minute because no one has any money to keep them," said Mr Fitzsimons.

"People are struggling to pay rising energy bills and many have to find ways of saving money. Unfortunately, caring for and looking after kittens and puppies costs money and many people simply

can't afford it anymore and feel they have no choice but to abandon them."

Mr Fitzsimons advised pet owners to neuter their dogs and cats and to not breed pets unless they have a home to send them to.

"Don't take on animals unless you can afford to look after them," he added.

"It's also important to take out pet insurance because if a pet does get sick or needs veterinary treatment many people will not be able to pay for that treatment, and that's another reason why pets will be abandoned."



The four kittens left outside Newry Veterinary Centre last Saturday. R2236117