



NEWCASTLE COMMUNITY CENTRE
NEWCASTLE COMBINED COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
N.C.C.A. LTD.

PRESS RELEASE

URDF Funding for Newcastle Community Centre

The community of the Greater Newcastle/Dangan area of Galway City representing a population of 6,000+ residents have been waiting patiently for the past six months for the expected announcement of funding for their long-awaited Community Centre under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF). The application for URDF funding was submitted by Galway City Council as part of their projects last May.

The Directors of N.C.C.A. CLG – a charity formed to represent Newcastle Combined Community Association – has been working with Galway City Council to develop a Community Centre in Newcastle for the past 25 years. A suitable and central site was obtained from the Council. Planning permission was obtained for the Centre. Galway City Council in January 2020 unanimously supported a motion to apply for grant aid under URDF. Over the years the local community of Newcastle/Dangan generously contributed funding to N.C.C.A. CLG to enable the completion of detailed design work and preliminary site preparation. The total local contribution to this project to-date is close to €200,000.

The current position is that the development - which includes a Community Centre, Children's Playground, All Weather Pitch and Sensory Garden - will be "shovel ready" to go to tender once the URDF grant aid is received.

Newcastle is an urban area, equivalent in size to Ballinasloe or Westport, and deprived of any community facilities. The original centre where the community gathered was taken over by NUIG a decade ago. The local hotel which was the meeting place since then was demolished and developed into a student accommodation centre. There is no community facilities or meeting place in the Newcastle/Dangan area – not even an hotel, bar or restaurant. The nearest meeting place requires travel to the east side of the city or to Salthill. The facilities proposed and included on the URDF application outlined how the Centre will provide for the regeneration and rejuvenation of this deprived area of the city.

The continued delay in the announcement of URDF funding is disappointing. Constructive discussions took place with the CEO Galway City Council who advised us that URDF was the appropriate funding mechanism for our Centre. A meeting also took place with the former Minister for Housing where it was confirmed that URDF funding was an appropriate

mechanism for grant aid for the Community Centre. The defining criteria by Government for URDF funding is for projects that “support more compact and sustainable development through regeneration and rejuvenation” and the primary focus is “on supporting integrated urban developments that enhance the urban area in question, so that it becomes an attractive and vibrant place in which people choose to live and work, as well as to invest”. The Newcastle Community Centre project and outdoor facilities fits all those criteria.

We were advised that the funding announcement would be made every month since last September. The explanation received in December from the Minister’s office was that the delay was due to the complexity of many of the URDF projects. Representations were made by the N.C.C.A. CLG Directors to Galway West Government Oireachtas members requesting that funding for our less complex community projects to be decoupled from complex local authority projects. This would allow for the early announcement of funding for our Community Centre.

We, the Directors and Committee and the local Community of Newcastle/Dangan area of Galway city, have made our contribution to this much needed development. We now request our Oireachtas Members to make the representations to the Minister to grant funding of our URDF Application. This will allow construction to commence on our community project that will rejuvenate and regenerate the Newcastle/Dangan area of Galway City, a city centre location the size of a mid-size town without even the most basic community facilities.

On 3rd February 2021, the Minister for Public Expenditure brought an Appropriation Bill motion before the Dail requesting approval to carry-over €709 million in unspent capital projects from 2020. This included €214 million for the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage with URDF being identified as a key component. The continual delay in approving worthwhile and “shovel ready” projects like the Newcastle Community facilities will make it more difficult to avoid a large carry-over of capital projects into 2022. The early funding announcements for Community Projects under URDF would demonstrate the Government’s empathy with community organisations who we feel will play a key role as we recover from Covid-19.

We, on behalf of the residents of the Newcastle/Dangan area of Galway City, now request that our political representatives take the action required to ensure the early funding for the Newcastle Community Centre under URDF. We thank you for your support.

Directors of N.C.C.A CLG (Newcastle Combined Community Association)

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