

AUGHRIM BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

Annual General Meeting –26th April, 2010

Chairman's Report

Thank you all for coming. It is a great vote of support for our Business Association.

When we first met in Lawless Hotel on the 19th March 2009 we agreed the objectives of the Association which were as follows :

1. Promote Aughrim Businesses and Aughrim as a place to do business.
2. To form a United body of representation for businesses in Aughrim
3. To promote the support by members of the Association for the business of other members and associations to achieve stability and future progress
4. To undertake projects that would support these aims and receive popular support

Promoting Aughrim and its businesses has taken many forms :

Our first success was the production of the “**Aughrim needs your business**” posters. We are very grateful to: Eoin O'Connor, Christine Van Bussel, Marty Byrne and Collette Ward for their work on this project. We have had a lot of very positive feedback on these posters and it's great to see them on display in all the shops.

The project that really represented our Association was the outside broadcast with Declan Meehan on the Morning Show on the Friday the 18th September. We are very grateful to Deirdre Fox and her staff for all the work that went into organising this event and of course Gerry Phelan for hosting it. It was an ideal opportunity for Aughrim to sell itself. Once again the feedback was very, very positive. It was a good example of our Association liaising with other Associations and groups within the town. It demonstrated what the ABA can achieve. This Broadcast cost us €1,000.00 to host and was an excellent example of how your membership fees were put to effective use on behalf of the town.

The Christmas period was another key time to promote the village in an eye-catching way. We hosted an Aughrim Expo in the Forrester's Hall on the 20th December 2009. We are indebted to Teresa Byrne for her help with the Hall. Ray Caulfield repaired the lights and Christien Van Bussel and her team did an amazing job in preparing the hall on the days and nights

beforehand. A debt of gratitude is also due to Margaret Stapleton, Marty Byrne-Winterbortham, Deirdre Keogh and Kathryn Stiles who generously gave of their time in assisting with this project.

We had stall-holders from a variety of associations and community groups within the town. The Garda traffic Corp stayed for 4 hours or more, on what was a bitterly cold day. We owe Garda Billy Ryan a big round of applause in arranging that for us.

It was a splendid moment to launch our Business Directory for 2010. It is proving to be a great success. It was one of our key objectives to boosting trade from within and without Aughrim. My thanks to Kathryn Stiles, Christien Van Bussell and the sponsor for the Directory, who printed it free of charge. In addition Deirdre Fox and her team made certain that all the information provided in the Directory was correct and then for uploaded it onto the website.

As you can see we have used several high-profile occasions to highlight our work, but what of the day-to-day promotional work ?

To date we have become members of Wicklow Country Tourism and operate a Tourist Information Point in the Green Bean, many thanks to Stephen & Nadine for that. We should also express our gratitude to Martina Byrne of Sublimity who helped establish the tourist point in the first place.

Over the last few weeks Marty Byrne, myself and Christien Van Bussell have re-launched the Town Notice Board, which Christien made with the help of her father. Our thanks to Miley Carroll for facilitating the re-instatement of the notice board. Anything relating to Aughrim can be given to Marty or myself and we will see that it gets displayed. Deirdre and her colleagues will then upload the details on to the aughrim.ie website.

Which brings me to another aim of our Association : To work with other organisations and associations in the town and offer mutual support. Deirdre Fox has been in regular contact with the Tidy Towns Committee with regard to the aughrim.ie website. Darragh Byrne has been a wonderful webmaster and asset to our Association during the year.

Other examples of mutual support include the “lighting of the Christmas tree” at the Monument on the 5th December. This was a fantastic success. There was a large turn-out on a very wet and cold Saturday evening. Refreshments were provided free by Theresa Byrne and her

family, Marty Byrne and her co-workers, Ken & Louise of the Stonecutter and the Green bean. Garda Ryan directed traffic and the Church choir, ably- assisted by a selection of students from The Sacred Heart National School, provided the Carol singing. "Goodie Bags" were distributed by Annette Hederman of the Monument and included gifts donated by herself and Deirdre Keogh ("The Beauty Spot"). P.R. for this event was ably provided by Ann Egan. It felt great to be a part of such a memorable community event.

We supported the Aughrim Festive Committee with a very large turn out to the Pub Quiz and enjoyed it very much. In the future we hope to offer greater support for 2010 and we are planning on becoming members of AOIFE (The Association of Irish Festive Events) for 2010. I know Deirdre has had contact with them during the past month.

Our representation brief is ongoing and I know Pat O'Neill and his committee is hoping to address our concerns re rates, parking, etc to the Council sometime soon. We had a great turn-out on the 28th May when local Politicians Messers Vincent Blake, Pat Doran and Nikky Kelly addressed our Association with Mr Donal O'Sullivan (President of Wicklow Country Chamber of Commerce) also in attendance. This was a pre-election encounter and it would be a useful exercise to invite them all back over the next few months to see if we can move our concerns with the Council forward.

Kay Leeson was instrumental in facilitating this event. Indeed we owe Kay and her colleagues, from the OW River Developmental Association, a great debt. They cast us a wonderful vote of confidence at the very beginning of our Association when they gave us €902.96 to open our Bank Account.

Going Forward

We can all be heartened by the level of involvement of businesses and community groups in the town with our Association during the last 13 months. We have had meetings in 7 locations. Practically everyone in the Main Street has joined us at one meeting or another and we have a very large membership list and contributors. I see no reason why this shouldn't continue.

Many thanks to all of you who took the time to attend our many meetings.

There are 2 special projects planned for next year, the Calendar and the Christmas Cards which we hope to have on sale for September/October 2010.

We are launching a Photography Competition over the coming weeks.. The aim is to choose 12 outstanding photographs that celebrate Aughrim All Year Round and will be included in a calendar of Aughrim for 21011. An exhibition of the winning entries is planned for the Autumn. This competition is to go nationwide and draw maximum attention to Aughrim over the coming months. The closing date for the competition will be 13.08.10. Details of the competition will be posted on www.aughrim.ie and on the Community Notice Board.

We have also been approached by Even Doyle of the Brooklodge informing us that he wishes to host a wild food festival in November 2011.

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the membership to express our sincerest thanks to Deirdre Fox and her team : Ursula O Halloran and Jennifer Byrne. They have been wonderful at keeping us informed via e-mails, keeping the minutes and issuing any number of memos. We could not have achieved anything without their outstanding contribution to our association.

Thanks, too, to our Treasurer, Deirdre Keogh, who has done a great job of keeping track of funds.

Thank-you to all of you who have given your time and energy to the Association throughout the year.

Neil Gallagher,
Chairman,
Aughrim Business Association