

## THE LIVING TRADITION

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### **COMHALTAS – CORONAVIRUS**

#### **Communication No. 14**

It is with great sadness that I start this Communication with the passing of our dear friend and colleague Nora Butler. The sadness and sense of loss, when the news spread, was palpable and widespread. There was added sorrow when the current crisis prevented us from attending Nora's funeral Mass. This celebration of Nora's life was inspiring and edifying as befitted the life of this noble lady. I was asked to send some words of recollection and appreciation which I now share with you:

**It is only two years since I stood on the altar of this beautiful church in Nenagh and bade farewell to our colleague and friend Pat Swan, loving husband of Nora Butler.**

**It is heartbreaking that to-day we mourn the passing of Nora but in a very changed world. The thousands of people who would have wished to be with you for the celebration of Nora's life cannot do so in this time of crisis. We will be there in prayer and spirit.**

**To us in Brú Ború and Comhaltas, Nora was family and her passing has touched us deeply. The messages from all over the world are testimony to the affection and admiration in which she was held. There is an unfillable void in the lives of all who had the privilege to know her and call her friend. Many a tear has been shed by young and old. Úna and I will miss her so much.**

**Nora's sincerity, generosity of spirit and gentle but firm faith have inspired us all. Her sense of fun and humour melted many a cold heart. In addition to the villages, towns and cities of Ireland, she brought her God-given talents throughout the world: America, Australia, Japan, China, Libya and throughout Europe. The joy, camaraderie and goodness she dispensed cannot be measured. This is her legacy which will be promoted and enhanced by new generations. This is her living monument.**

**To Mary we extend our heartfelt sympathy and we share her sorrow at this sad time. We know that she will be comforted by many happy memories and good friends.**

**Tipperary's Queen of song has left us but Nora Butler will live on in fond memories and our fine traditional songs. Her name will never be far from the lips of those who cherish our cultural and Christian traditions.**

**Ar dheis Dé go raibh Nora agus Pat.**

- While many of the normal functions in Clasac, the Comhaltas Regional Resource Centre, have been forced to cease due to the Covid 19 ‘lock down’ the Clontarf Community Employment Scheme continues to provide workers to areas of the scheme that are critical to the local community. One of these is the Meals on Wheels service which operates out of St. Gabriel’s Parish Centre and has a number of CE employees who are central to the running of this essential community service.

The ever-active Jim McAllister of Clasac, who is also Chairman of the Clontarf CE Scheme, reports that since the outbreak of the Covid virus, the number of meals supplied on a daily basis has risen from 65 to almost 120.

There are a number of reasons for this increase. Many of the new clients had previously had a daily meal with family or relations who lived close by and were a short walk or drive away. This is no longer possible due to the travel restrictions. There has also been an increase due to many of these clients cocooning and being unable to shop for themselves. All have been provided with a daily hot meal from the Meals on Wheels service and the CE participants, working alongside the St. Gabriel’s Parish workers, have stepped up to the mark by working increased hours and ensuring that no one in the Community is left out.

The increase in meals also means a need for extra drivers to deliver and again it is a credit to the Scheme that a number of participants from other areas, who are currently not working, have volunteered their time to carry out this vital service.

As we wait for the next stage of the Government’s plan for getting back to work, we are preparing our participants in both the Gheel Autism Centre and in Manresa House (the Jesuit Retreat Centre) to resume their outdoor work. Both these sponsors require constant maintenance to the outside gardens of their premises, as they provide essential areas of calm and solitude, which is a vital aspect of the service they provide to our community. The Clontarf Community Employment Scheme are proud and honoured to be an integral part of this Community effort.

- That fine lady Mary McBride contacted us with the good news that the Melbourne Comhaltas branch is this year celebrating 50 years in our worldwide cultural movement. Congratulations and heartfelt good wishes for the future.

We are keenly aware of the challenges facing our Comhaltas branches abroad and particularly in Australia. We are now operating in 18 countries worldwide and are at present prioritising our diaspora for special attention. The Irish diaspora, numbering many millions, is akin to the Irish nation in exile. They are true ambassadors for Ireland.

Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann each year is a reminder of the global support for Irish cultural traditions. 750,000 people attended Fleadh 2019.

How things have changed so drastically in the meantime! What we took for granted in many cases is no more. Coronavirus is now the hidden enemy creating merciless havoc and grief.

As a race, we rely on our innermost spirituality and tenacity of character. Neighbour relies on neighbour. As in days of old, the vulnerable people amongst us are our priority. There will be a renewal of the old Gaelic spirit which in the past – in times of famine, conflict and mass-emigration – buoyed us with hope and determination.

We are so proud to have the Melbourne branch as colleagues on the challenging road ahead. We salute your endeavours. Bail ó Dhia oraibh.

Is i dteannta a chéile is fearr sinn. Is féidir linn dóchas agus misneach a chothú agus sinn ag saothrú an chultúir Ghaelaigh. Le beart de réir ár mbriathar, is féidir linn ardú meanman a spreagadh i measc an phobail.

- The Bunachoiste is keenly aware of the mammoth rebuilding and regeneration task facing us all in the months and years ahead. We know that, as in the past, Comhaltas will not be found wanting and our members will be united and determined on the road ahead – AN RÓD SEO ROMHAINN.

**AN RÓD SEO ROMHAINN** – the road ahead – has huge potential.

Comhaltas at all levels is possessed of high standard expertise; a notable track record; strong volunteerism; good standing with Government and public agencies; and a positive profile. Delivering a cohesive and productive roadmap – to complement **AN RÉ NUA** – which will maximise our potential and extend our influence ‘í lár an aonaigh’ is an exciting challenge and mission. We have many milestones from the past to guide us on this journey in the future. Ní neart go cur le chéile.

In an ever-changing society; policy re-appraisal by state agencies; value-for-money requirements; statutory regulations; Brexit implications; legal imperatives; commitments and obligations; etc. Comhaltas needs to be vigilant, professional, proactive and relevant.

Planning and direction for **AN RÓD SEO ROMHAINN** will be broad based and consultative. It will take cognisance of our strength, potential and challenges.

The first step will be the formulation of a ‘**ROADMAP**’ setting out the internal and external **MILESTONES** of objectives, direction and resources. This will be underpinned by the cultural assets of Comhaltas – tangible and intangible.

Comhaltas will identify the prospective participating contributors and teams, officers, subcommittees, ceannairí, Fleadh leaders, consultative teams, etc. These will operate under guidelines of the Ardchomhairle and monitored by the Buanchoiste.

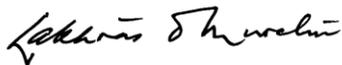
The **ROADMAP** will be compiled by a team involving the Buanchoiste, national officers, Ceannairí, Provincial Council representatives. The **ROADMAP** will identify the consultative teams and terms of reference for each team. The **ROADMAP** will also include timelines. The **ROADMAP** to be ratified by the Ardchomhairle.

Each consultative team will prepare a comprehensive Report to be ratified by the Ardchomhairle. These Reports will be correlated into a single proposed **PLAN**. This will form the basis of the final consultative process involving a team of key people who will have the services of a professional consultant.

It is envisaged that the finished document in booklet form (**AN RÓD SEO ROMHAINN**) will have a bullet-point résumé of the full proposal. This résumé will, as required, be complemented by the full proposal.

Slán agus Beannacht go fóill agus go raibh Rath Dé ar bhúr saothar. Smaoinímíd i gcónaí ar na daoine a chuaidh romhainn agus a sheas an fód in am an ghatair. Beidh an scéal amhlaidh arís an t-am seo.

Mise, le mór-mheas,



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Labhrás Ó Murchú  
Ardstiúrthóir CCÉ