

from the government, social intervention funding, and corporate grants, it is anticipated the centre will open next month in a building on Church Street, near the Bishop's Palace.

Mary Donnelly, who is facilitating the process, says the building was previously used by designers, who are donating much of their equipment to the scheme.

"We have colour photocopiers, Apple computers, members of the community are also donating laptops, and a lot of people are bringing their own IT equipment," she said.

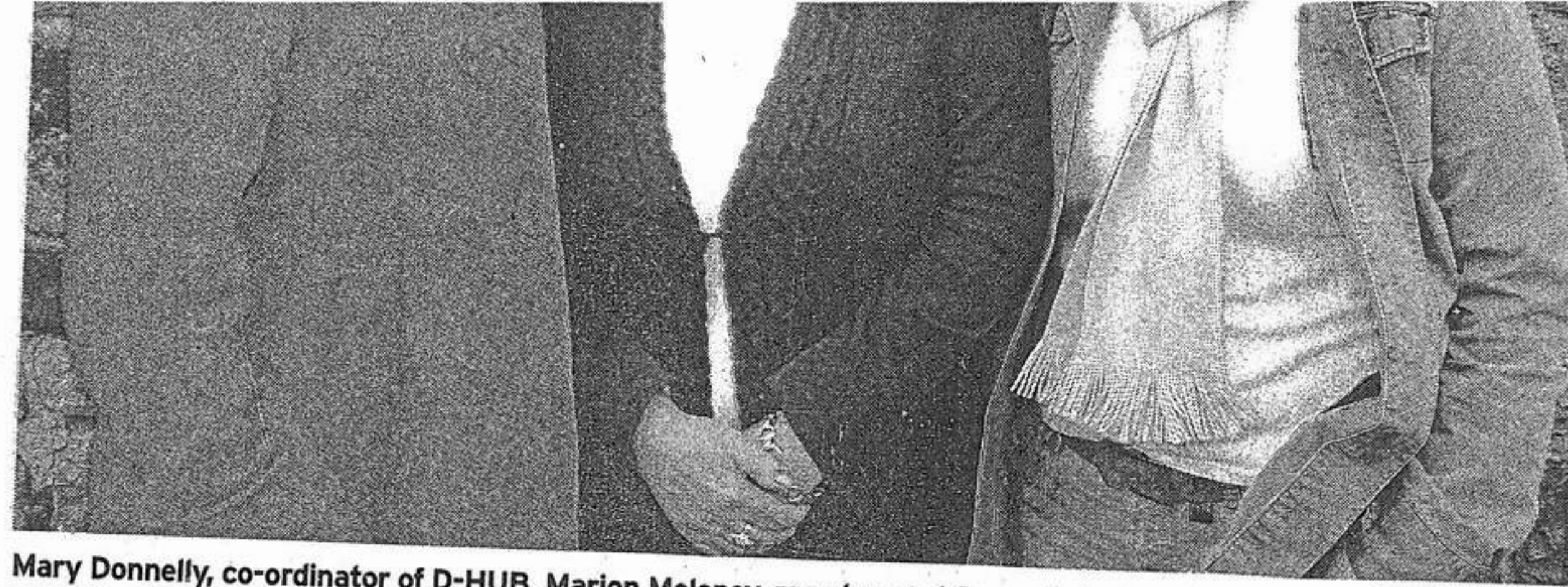
No other community facility in the area currently has plans to tackle the so-called Digital Divide.

Put simply, this is an inequality between groups, broadly construed, in terms of access to, use of, or knowledge of information and communication technologies.

It often effects people in disadvantaged areas, and the elderly.

Ms Donnelly says the aim is to provide call-centre, sales and computer training to people. It is hoped the project will supply staff to call centres in the commercial sector, including Sky and UPC.

"We are about job



Mary Donnelly, co-ordinator of D-HUB, Marion Moloney, member and Susan Daly Walsh, chairperson of the co-operative business, which is expected to open next month on King's Island in the city.

Picture: Adrian Butler

creation, and about helping tackle the digital divide. We are tackling areas where it is shown they are under-represented in the digital process," Ms Donnelly said.

She has already held meetings at Google HQ in Dublin and thanks to the involvement of mayor, and local councillor Gerry McLoughlin, city hall staff have agreed to provide technical support, should anything go wrong.

Unlike other community facilities in the area, the D-HUB is to be established as a co-operative business to ensure all its members have a say in how it is run, in return for a joining fee of €50 which will be returned

if a profit is turned. Mayor McLoughlin says this project is the most important he has been a part of in his nine years of

**"We're talking about job creation, and helping tackle the divide"**

local politics.

He told the meeting: "We are all here for one reason, and this is that we love everything about St Mary's

Park. But we want this to be a service to work all over the country. We all want to be part of one team - we need to bridge the divide."

Pa O'Donnell, St Mary's Park, said the new project "will be more than an educational centre".

"It will also be a social centre. There is no reason this cannot stay open between 9am and 9pm."

Many people at the meeting said they had attempted to get involved in community activities in the area, but they were held back.

Susan Daly, a mother-of-three, says she has been "completely excluded" from other community facilities,

with no explanation given.

"I want to be a good role model for my children: I wanted to give back to the community, but I was not allowed to do so. I tried to get involved to no avail," she said.

Ms Donnelly - who has worked in the community sector for 25 years - believes that community programmes across the county have become "stale", and no longer fit for purpose.

"Huge amounts of money have been poured into community development. But there is an element of the poverty industry at play here. Organisations have

Pictured in the community cafe in King's Island, where meetings were held to formulate the new digital hub are, left to right, Stephen Moloney, member of the co-operative, Mary Donnelly, co-ordinator, Rita Johnson, member, Mayor Gerry McLoughlin, Marian Moloney, member, and Connie Airey, treasurer.



Pictured in the new digital hub are sisters Louise and Jackie Kelly and Mayor Gerry McLoughlin.

Picture: Mary Donnelly

become stale. They are still drawing government funding. But it is not benefitting the areas like it should."

She says the democratic structure of the D-HUB will prevent this from happening.

Mayor McLoughlin says he has been "banging his head against a stone wall" for years to try and ensure residents in communities

are properly represented. He feels regeneration in the city areas did not help empower residents.

"When regeneration started, I was disappointed at the social programme. Then I realised that it was the people themselves who were being excluded from making decisions, and they would need to be empowered. They must be given ownership, and

become the stakeholders: this will improve the confidence to get on with their lives, and make decisions that are in their own best interests or their children's best interests," Mayor McLoughlin says.

Ms Donnelly said that because a lot of community work is done without the consultation of the people they serve, it can lead to problems.

# Ceremony marks band's famous All-Ireland win 50 years ago

Maureen Sparling

FIFTY years to the very date, April 28, 2013, St Mary's All-Ireland Prize Winning Band, met to commemorate a unique event which took place in Wexford town.

It was to recall their winning of the Republic of Ireland Fife and Drum Championship back in 1963. Three of the members of the famous band on that day half a century ago, are still members of that long standing musical ensemble which was established back in 1885; they are Paddy Casey, John McNamara and Jack McGrath, who is president of the band.

They were the main celebrities on the day. This accolade was repeated in the following years, 1964, 1975, 1986 and again in 1988. A buzz of frenzied excitement greeted me as I entered the hallowed portal

that is their band room on Mary Street.

As one would have expected, the band members were decked out impeccably in their distinctive uniform, the gold braiding of which presents a striking visual pleasure to the onlooker.

As is their form the various band members were happy to greet all attendees on that day of major celebration.

There was ample time to enjoy the outstanding picture display that graces the walls of this musical venue and to escape into the lavish museum where the precious trophies on display present a visual delight to all who view it from time to time, before the Padre, Canon Donough O'Malley, arrived to begin proceedings, which he duly did.

Following a little talk appropriate to the occasion,

in which he recalled the humble beginnings of the band, he proceeded to bless the trophies and the people and bandroom itself, in light of the improvements that have transpired there in recent times. A generous sampling of delicious sandwiches was accompanied by an eclectic array of drinks to suit everyone's palate and methinks a very good woman or two was behind that culinary aspect of the day. Among those who received accolades on this auspicious occasion were: Aidan Hurley and Dom Kiely played in 1964 and 1965 when the Band won these contests also.

They were each presented with a plaque to commemorate their success fifty years later. Eoin McNamara was presented with the Christy Nash trophy for young

musician of the year 2013, a trophy which he keeps, sponsored by JJ Keneally.

Eoin is a very promising young band member who attends the local Gaelcholáiste Luimnigh. Parish scribes, Denis O'Shaughnessy and Maureen Sparling, both received an Honorary Life Membership for their positive promotion of the band over the years, yours truly being only the second woman ever to receive this honour since the band's inception; the first woman to receive this honour was our former Mayor, Ms Frances Condell. For me personally, as well as receiving my lovely framed Honorary Life Membership cert, the highlight of the event was that of observing 96 year old Paddy Casey, playing the drums with no small amount of obvious strength. Continued success to this



St Mary's Fife and Drum Band winning the Republic of Ireland Fife and Drum Championship back in April 1963

wonderful Parish musical ensemble, who are ever ready to attend our many

and varied functions. And if our city motto translates "A city well

studied in the art of war," then theirs could well be, "A Band well schooled in the

art of sociability!" Indeed, that final word could well be deemed their true insignia.

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