

Mayday comes to rescue of tourism firms

By LEADER REPORTER

CITY restaurants, cafes and bars are an integral part of Limerick's tourist appeal "but just don't recognise the fact or realise that they could be playing a very influential role".

So says Pdraig Cleary, whose Mayday Management Consultants firm is managing the Tourism Learning Network that 60 tourism-gearred operations in the region have signed up to since it was launched in April this year. "We have hotels, leisure and activity centres, visitor attractions, tour and coach operators but interest from the service side of business in the city has been thin" he confesses.

"Like many other sectors of the business community, bars, restaurants and the growing selection of casual dining outlets in the city can often be heard complaining that not enough is being done to develop

city tourism. But they have an opportunity to have a say and also a direct practical part in coming forward with new ideas and initiatives through the Tourism Learning Network" said Mr Cleary.

He was involved in rural and heritage tourism in the Burren and on an international scale with Shannon Development before setting up his own consultancy 20 years ago.

Since then his Mayday venture has been involved in bringing a number of tourism developments and projects from concept to full operational stage, including major visitor attractions and leisure facilities.

Based at the Tait Business Centre in the centre of the city, Pdraig Cleary admits - "we know that city business owners and managers have demands on their time and money from a plethora of business organisation and promotion bodies, but the Tourism Learning Network costs a firm just €10 a week".

That's because Failte Ireland picks up three-quarters of the €2,000 cost per company of the individual business consulting sessions, and group workshops and seminars at both county and regional levels that the Tourism Learning Network provides. "As it stands, the heavily subsidised cost of €2,000 would normally just cover the consultancy sessions" Pdraig Cleary points out, and adds - "because there is so much activity involved over the course of the programme, firms that have signed up can send different personnel along to the specialised sessions on subjects like marketing, human resources and financial management."

The Tourism Learning Network was devised by Failte Ireland to give local tourism operators and firms that earn spin-off income from the tourist trade a say and direct involvement in shaping and

developing distinctly local tourism products and policies. By bringing smaller scale operations together to pool ideas and resources, the aim is to build on strengths and strength in numbers to win back the share of tourism numbers and revenues that has drained from the regions towards Dublin over the past five years.

The Tourism Learning Network groups from the three counties in the region will be giving an account of themselves at a special function at the Castletroy Park Hotel on December 11.

The programme is to run for three years, "so right now we are in the process of enlisting the intake of what will be the 2007 group. Their efforts next year will be supported by the network members from this inaugural year and by the end of the third year we are aiming to have over 150 operations in the region working together" Pdraig Cleary said.

LEADER BRIEFS

Isla Grant

SCOTLAND'S most popular singer-songwriter Isla Grant and her band will perform at LIT Millennium Theatre on Saturday November 11 at 8pm. Isla is a singer-songwriter of the highest quality where she plays to sell-out audiences in concert halls and theatres. Tickets cost €26.50 and are available for booking by calling 061-322322.

ONE meeting

A MEETING of the Patrick Sarsfield Branch of Oglaihh Naisuinta na hEireann, the Organisation of National Ex-Sericemen and Women will take place this Wednesday evening at 8pm. The meeting will take place in the Soldiers Home in James Street. All current and intending members are welcome to attend.

Labour laws

THE Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Micheál Dineen, has said the Government has recovered over €1 million this year for workers who have been underpaid by unscrupulous employers. The minister said six times more inspections had taken place in 2006 than in 2005.

Poppy Boycott

REPUBLICAN Sinn Fein are calling on people to boycott Poppy Day this Saturday. Spokesman Sean O'Neill likened donating money to the cause to "propping up the crown".

Crime analysts

THE Tánaiste and Minister for Justice, Michael McDowell, has said that An Garda Síochána is due to begin a recruitment of crime analysts. He said the analysts would provide intelligence back-up for the main garda force and that their role was modelled on that adopted by the PSNI in Northern Ireland.

3G Phone Mast

MOBILE operators 3G are seeking permission to construct three antennae and two point to point dishes on the rooftop of Chapel Court, at Cathedral Place.

Bothar

THE Limerick charity Bothar has scooped the annual TAP award given by the Irish Academy of Public Relations. The win will involve a new national fund-raising campaign for Bothar, designed developed and implemented by students of the academy.

Harris is back at Crescent Comp

By ANNE SHERIDAN

LOCAL artist Thomas Delohery unveiled a new collection of paintings of Richard Harris at the actor's old school, the Crescent Comprehensive, last week.

The show, Richard Harris: Anything is Possible, features 38 paintings, some of which were previously featured in the first tribute exhibition in the Friars Gate Theatre in Kilmallock.

The pieces concentrate on Richard's life before leaving Limerick for London and eventually the bright lights of Hollywood.

The five exhibitions to Limerick's finest actor is organised by the Clare painter and this second tribute will run until November 20. It was launched last Friday night and was opened by Marie Harris, wife of James Harris - Richard's older brother. "She spoke of some very fond memories; it was a lovely personal connection for the opening," said Mr Delohery. Limerick poet Mark Whelan also read three poems - Harris as Bull McCabe, Harris as Exile and Harris as King Arthur.

It was the death of Harris on October 25 2002 that led Delohery to begin putting together his tribute to the actor. "How could somebody as large in life and stature as Richard Harris simply fade out of our existence," he questioned.

Each of Richard's three sons - Jamie, Jared and Damien - have repeatedly expressed their gratitude to Delohery who has captured Harris' many different moods. "I always like to see



Thomas Delohery speaking at the opening of the Harris exhibition

my work going to a good home and in this case, it couldn't have been better," he said.

Prices for the paintings range from €1000 to €1700 and to date Richard's brother, his three sons, various relatives and the

owner of Charlie St. George's Bar, which Richard used to regularly frequent, have all purchased Delohery's work.

The paintings can be viewed at the school from Monday to Friday from 9am to 4pm.

From December 26 to 29 From Dick's Harris to Richard Harris will run at Limerick racecourse; Richard Harris, The Bull McCabe will be opened by Bill Keane - son John B. Keane in Listowel on February 3 running until

February 28. The tribute exhibitions conclude with Kilkee - Richard Harris' Spiritual Home in March.

For further information, email tomdehery@hotmail.com, call 086 8975104 or see www.irish-art.com/thomasdelohery