

# EU delegation visits Courtmacsherry and Bandon community projects

By Mary Rose McCarthy



Pictured in Courtmacsherry (from left) Garda Damien White, Dr. Helen McGurk, Pat Fitzgerald, Age Friendly, Bandon, Aisling Conway Lenihen, CIT., Dara Gannon, Courtmacsherry Community Shop, Mary O'Brien, Age Friendly, Bandon and Garda Frances Murphy. PHOTO MARTIN WALSH

The Hincks Centre for Entrepreneurship Excellence, based in Cork Institute of Technology, was part of an EU delegation to visit the Courtmacsherry Community Shop and Bandon Age Friendly Town recently as part of an EU investigation into the value of the 'Silver Economy'. The 'Silver Economy' refers to the economic opportunities related to an ageing population in areas like healthcare, mobility, and transport. Headed by Clonakilty native Dr Helen McGuirk, the Hincks Centre was one of nine EU partners, along with representatives from France, Spain, Slovenia, Poland, Sweden, and Portugal. Courtmacsherry was picture perfect for the visitors, with blue skies reflected in a full tide and late evening spring sunshine. After a

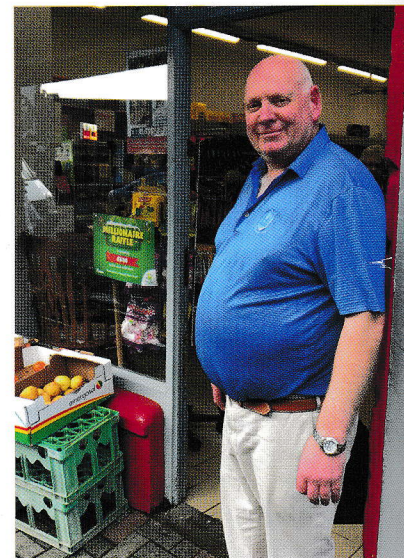
tour of the community shop, everyone retired to the Golden Pheasant cafe where, over coffee and homemade baking, **Dara and Mark Gannon** outlined the ripple effect the shop has had on the community. It has evolved into a meeting place, a stop for the Local Link Bus, and a courier drop off point for those working away from the village. Mark explained that two pubs have reopened since the shop started in 2016, and the cafe is now doing great business and offering homemade pizzas and local craft beer on its evening menu. Such is the success of the shop as a voluntary, community project, it has even featured on the US television network, CNN.

## **Bandon Age Friendly**

Moving on to Bandon, the delegates learned from **Mary O'Brien, Chair of**

**Bandon Age Friendly** Committee, about the age friendly benches at various points in the town, picnic benches accessible to wheelchair users, and age friendly parking spaces. She thanked **Noelle Desmond, Age Friendly County Programme Manager**, for her support through council funding. Mary regretted that the visitors were not seeing the town at its best and explained the major upgrading work currently being undertaken. Jerry O'Donovan welcomed the delegates to the family grocery business he runs with his siblings Anthony and Lucy. As well as a local home delivery service, they run other errands for customers like a trip to the butchers or to collect dry cleaning. The shop is easily accessible and has a chair, a stool, and reading glasses for customers. So well do they know their clientele, they can prompt them if a weekly purchase is forgotten. They also take telephone orders for collection or delivery and are open 7 days a week, earning them a loyal customer base. **Philip McLaughlin** of Bandon Medical Hall told the delegates how his family-run pharmacy had noticed a need to cater to older and less able customers, a fact

borne out by the number of customers from all over West Cork who now come to McLaughlin's for wheelchairs, mobility scooters, crutches and other mobility aids, all of which can be ordered to suit personal requirements. The entrance to the shop is ramped for easy access and seating is available for people waiting for prescriptions and other purchases. The group also heard from McLaughlin's Age Friendly Advocate, **Sinead Murray**. The delegates thanked all involved in both initiatives and said they hoped to replicate the best practices in their home countries.



Jerry O'Donovan, outside Denis O'Donovan & Family Grocer, Bandon, one of the few family-owned grocery stores left in the town, renowned for its friendliness and customer service.

# Opinion

THE

MARCH 2020

Elected - Yes  
Government - No

VOL. 43 NO. 3 Price €3.90



Win a  
Hotel  
Break