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Registered Offices: Skerries Community Centre, Dublin Road, Skerries Co. Dublin.

Skerries Community Association Annual General Meeting 2023: See who we are and what we have done!

**Come to our AGM on Thursday 15 June 2023, starting 8 p.m.,
Little Theatre, Skerries Community Centre**

The official Notification for AGM 2023 and the audited accounts for 2022 are available on the SCA website at skerriesca.com/category/news

No need to register, just come along!



SCA Chair Jane Landy writes:

The past year has flown by and the freedom from Covid anxieties has re-energised our committees and volunteers. As I write, the **all-weather pitch at the Community Centre** is being re-surfaced for a new generation of players. Right next to it stands the Community Centre's new **bee-friendly flower bed** – a sign of how important

biodiversity has become for all of our committees. **Solar panels** (PV) will soon be installed on the roof of the sports hall, helping to reduce our contribution to global warming.

Sustainability – a common thread

One common thread across the SCA for the past year has been the focus on **sustainability**. Last autumn, Sustainable Skerries organised a course on how we in Skerries can address the biodiversity and climate change crises, attended by (among others) members of various SCA committees. This has led to two **"Skerries Eco Nights"** so far, where ideas and learning were exchanged - and there are plans for a **Skerries Eco Festival** in September.

SSECI (Skerries Sustainable Energy Community Initiative) commissioned and launched a **Skerries Energy Master Plan** in the autumn. Many of our committees, particularly Skerries Cycling Initiative, are engaging with Fingal County Council on the active travel strategy for Skerries. **Skerries Tidy Towns** integrates sustainability into all of their projects. It will be interesting to see what can be achieved when we all work together to tread more lightly on our environment.

Shortly after our last AGM, we celebrated the **40th birthday of Skerries Community Centre**. It was a day to remember, with brilliant sunshine, an afternoon of free activities and entertainments and hundreds of delighted kids and adults. We were lucky to have some of the founders of the Centre attend a dinner with us that evening. The 41st birthday is now in sight and the Community

The current SCA Directors are:

Officers first, then in alphabetical order by first name:

- **Jane Landy** (SCA Chair); SCA Finance Working Group (WG); Skerries Community Liaison Committee Rep
- **Michael McKenna** (SCA Company Secretary); Skerries Cycling Initiative; SCA Communications WG; SCA Finance WG; Local Banking Admin
- **Mary Conway** (SCA Treasurer); Skerries Tidy Towns; Skerries Age Friendly Town; SCA Finance WG; Local Banking Admin
- **Aoife Malone**, SCA Governance Policy Review
- **Breda Shankey**, Minutes Secretary; Skerries Community Liaison Committee Rep
- **Brendan Friel**, Skerries Town Twinning; SCA Finance WG
- **Brendan Sherlock**, Age Friendly Skerries; Fingal Public Participation Network
- **Brid Grimes**, SCA Communications WG; SCA Finance Working Group
- **Eithne O'Connell**, Skerries Sustainable Energy Community Initiative (co-opted February 2023)
- **Eric Byrne**, Skerries Community Centre Board of Management (co-opted May 2023)
- **Ger O'Mahony**, Skerries Autism Friendly Town (co-opted July 2022)
- **Helen Scullion**, Sustainable Skerries; SCA Communications WG
- **John Coleman**, Skerries Town Twinning
- **Shay Fanning**, Chair of the Skerries Community Centre Board of Management

Centre goes from strength to strength, gently guided by Shay Fanning and his colleagues on the Board of Management and Sharon Guinane, the Centre manager.

The SCA Board of Directors

Our eight committees (including the Community Centre and its Board of Management) are part of one company: **The Skerries Community Association CLG** (SCA). As the Board of Directors, our job is to provide oversight and support to all of the groups. We also engage with public bodies, especially Fingal County Council, and participate in groups such as the Fingal Public Participation Network and the Skerries Community Liaison Committee.

We have added three new directors to the board since our last AGM, Ger O'Mahony, Eithne O'Connell and Eric Byrne and are delighted to be working with them.

Honouring volunteers

This year we nominated **Maeve McGann** of Skerries Tidy Towns for an **International Women's Day leadership award** given by Fingal County Council. The Community Department created a magnificent collection of photographs of Maeve and other women leaders in communities across Fingal. The exhibition came to Rush Library last month and we held a coffee morning for Maeve in the library to acknowledge her outstanding contribution to the town.

We are very happy that we were able to nominate **Sabine McKenna**, chair of Sustainable Skerries, for a **Fingal Mayor's award**, in recognition of her amazing energy and efforts to make Skerries a more sustainable town. As we go to press, we do not yet know whether she will be among the 24 awardees... fingers crossed!

Each year at our AGM we present the **Skerries Volunteer of the Year Award** in memory of Jim Quigley (a founder of the Community Centre). This year, we want to recognise the work of a group. Nominations from the public have been coming in, and we will reveal which group is this year's recipient at our public AGM on Thursday, 15 June, in the Little Theatre.

Recently we learned with great sadness of the **sudden death of Paul Deans**. Paul was well-known among other things through his work with the Skerries Youth Support Services. He brought Rás Tailteann, the Irish international cycle race, to Skerries in 2006 and chaired our SCA Rás End Stage Committee for all the years that the race finished here. Nobody who watched the riders arrive in Strand Street will ever forget it. He made that happen and we will be forever grateful to him. His warmth and good humour will be greatly missed. Our condolences to his family and friends.

Join us!

The aim of The Skerries Community Association is to look after and enhance our beautiful town and vibrant community. If you share this aim and could spare a little time to help us, please contact us by emailing info@skerriesca.com. We are currently seeking a director to take on responsibility for communications, including our online presence. At a minimum, please join as a member of the association and sign up for the community newsflash (no charge for either). See our website for details.

Thank you!

A huge thanks to all my co-directors, especially to our company secretary Michael McKenna and to our treasurer Mary Conway.

To all of our committee members, staff of the Community Centre and the other volunteers who help us (such as Máire Jones for the website and Dee Langton for the newsflash) – a huge and heartfelt thank you!

Hoping to see you at our AGM,



Jane Landy (chair)

And this is what the community centre and our committees were engaged in over the last year:

Skerries Community Centre



Skерries Community Centre
Ionad Pobail na Sceirí

has almost reverted back to pre-Covid 19 levels of Activity.

The Community Centre Board of Management (BoM) continued to hold monthly meetings in person and welcomed a few new faces to the BoM in 2022 while saying goodbye to a few members who had served with distinction over many years.

With the lifting of many Covid 19 restrictions over the past twelve months the Community Centre

Finance The BoM was presented on a monthly basis with detailed financial reports which compared actual receipts and payments with budgeted expenditure. Given the difficult few years that the centre has just come out of, it is very encouraging to see that the centre continues to be in a healthy financial position.

Maintenance / Improvements: It has been a priority of the BoM to sustain a high level of maintenance and to carry out repair and improvements as finances allow. The old gym space saw a change of use to facilitate a studio, kitchen and social space for the tennis and hockey clubs and is now being used by both clubs on a regular basis.

The all-weather pitch is currently being resurfaced and will be available for use again very shortly.

In conjunction with Fingal County Council, benches are to be provided around the pitch and throughout the grounds of the Community Centre.

The Community Centre has received grants from Pobal to install solar panels on the roof of the sports hall, and this work will commence shortly. Once installed, the panels should result in the energy costs being reduced substantially.

Sticky Fingers Montessori: The Montessori has been a great success and one of the main contributors to our source of income. The two classes were full, and a third class has now been added. It is anticipated that a new modular building will replace the old prefab in the coming months, which will give a bigger space and allow extra children's places to be added to the Montessori School.

40th Year Celebration: The 40th Year celebrations of the Community Centre took place in August 2022, with over 4,000 people attending the centre on the day. Many clubs who use the facilities took the opportunity to show the community of Skerries some of the activities that are available within the centre. The day was an outstanding success and thanks must go to those who assisted in any way on the day.

Easter / Summer Camps: With the lifting of the Covid 19 restrictions, the Community Centre has recommenced the very successful Easter and Summer Camps in 2023.

Finally, I want to complement Sharon Guinane and her staff for managing the centre through another successful year and for their willingness to be flexible and inventive during some tricky times. In addition, I want to thank the members of the Board of Management for their work and commitment over the past year in supporting myself and the staff to ensure the best possible service to the community.

*Shay Fanning, Chair, Board of Management,
Skerries Community Centre*

Skerries Sustainable Energy Community Initiative (SSECI)



SSECI, Skerries Sustainable Energy Community Initiative, was set up in 2020 as a committee of the Skerries Community Association. Its primary aim is to build better **energy awareness and resilience** within the town, so that Skerries can

become more sustainability-focused. This would help the local community and economy to continue to thrive into the uncertain and challenging future, while allowing residents and visitors to enjoy a pleasant, clean environment, coupled with a high quality of urban life.

To this the end, in 2022, SSECI commissioned the SEAI-funded **Skerries Energy Master Plan (EMP)**. The research was conducted by the consultancy firm, PlanEnergy, and the full document plus a summary were launched at a public meeting in the Little Theatre in Skerries Community Centre in autumn 2022. You can see the plan on skerriesca.com/skerries-sustainable-energy-community-initiative.

In 2023, the main tasks for SSECI arising from the EMP have been based on the **Register of Opportunities** provided at the end of the Plan. At present, SSECI is investigating funding to conduct a feasibility study into the production of 5% of our Energy Supply in Skerries from **renewables**. The committee is also engaged in raising public awareness of the need for better insulated homes and businesses, and the opportunities offered by energy-saving techniques and new, more efficient technologies. Good examples of our current activities and public outreach include a recent article on monitoring efficient domestic energy use published in **Skerries News**, and videos on our **YouTube channel** explaining how to access data on household electricity usage provided by your new smart electricity meter as well as the Ins and Outs of purchasing an electric vehicle (EV) and switching to night-time electricity tariffs.

For further information, please email the SSECI Chair Michael Mullan-Jensen: skerries.seci@gmail.com

Sustainable Skerries

Our aim is to make Skerries resilient, regenerative, and a great place to live for all... now and in the years to come.



In order to get closer to that goal, we in Sustainable Skerries are active in the areas of **biodiversity, food, circular economy / waste reduction, sustainable energy, and sustainable transport**, often together with our fellow committees in the SCA. We also engage with Fingal County Council (e.g. in the consultation process for the next Fingal Development Plan).

Biodiversity: Our progress in our efforts to support & protect the rare **Large Carder Bee** was recognised by the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) who chose to partner with us and with Fingal County Council to hold the **Skerries Wild Bee Festival**. Talks, walks & workshops provided huge amounts of information for attendees.

In collaboration with talented local illustrator and artist Kristina Keegan, we produced the **Skerries Bee Map**, to show where in



Skerries the Large Carder Bee is found, and which plants are important for its survival. This map was also the centrefold for Skerries News.

Numerous other activities to benefit biodiversity included planting pollinator-friendly native species in key locations in Skerries; working closely with Fingal County Council, for example interplanting the daffodils on Barnageeragh Road with pollinator-friendly plants; the wildflower meadow at Skerries Educate Together National School; a "Pledge your Garden for the Large Carder Bee" initiative (*please do sign up via our*

website!); our very popular biodiversity walks in the Ballast Pit and other locations; and bee walks with local primary schools. All this hard work has been recognised by Community Foundation Ireland, whose grant funds our biodiversity work. They chose Sustainable Skerries & one other project from all their projects nationwide to promote: more info coming soon.

Skerries Open Orchards Project is another focus of our work. In the last year, we got closer again to our dream of having fruit and nut trees all over Skerries. We added 70 more trees and now have a total of 100 trees planted in eight open mini orchards in many parts of Skerries. Dozens of people came out in February and March to help plant them.

Awareness & Community: What can we in Skerries do about climate change and biodiversity loss? With funding from LEADER, we were able to organise a bespoke training course to explore this very question. We had weekly online classes and a weekend at Cloughjordan Ecovillage. The course was attended by 24 Skerries people from a wide range of organisations who came back to Skerries with new friendships & bursting with ideas to put into practice here.

Members of various groups, organisations & businesses around Skerries attended our two first **Skerries Eco Nights**. Starting this series of events is the first tangible action based on our learning from the Eco Town Course. At the first, wide-ranging evening, participants of the course summarised what we've been learning; others outlined what is already happening in Skerries, and what we have planned. We all then discussed what else we could do together to improve sustainability in Skerries.

A second **Eco Night** in April focussed on **Biodiversity**. Attendees from groups and organisations from across Skerries heard from Charlie Heasman (Sustainable Skerries) and Aileen O'Connor (FCC) about what we're doing in Skerries and more, before exploring what we can do for biodiversity individually and / or in our groups. See sustainableskerries.com/eco-nights for the results. And **mark your calendars for Fri 1 – Sun 3 September** for the first **Skerries Eco Festival**, with participation from various Skerries groups!

Circular Economy / Skills Transfer: We are getting ready to start a series of clothes repair classes in September or October (hopefully). Keep an eye on our website for details!

We would love to welcome more helpers onto the team and / or the committee. Join us! Help us!

Helen Scullion, SCA Liaison,
and Sabine McKenna, Chair, Sustainable Skerries.
Email: sustskerries@gmail.com
Website: SustainableSkerries.com

Skerries Cycling Initiative



Living in active hope might best summarise the feeling in SCI as we await developments with the **Active Travel Strategy** and the advancement of planning and design of the **Fingal Coastal Way**.

The imminent appointment of a design team by Fingal County Council to prepare Active Travel Town Plans, is a very welcome

development. Skerries will be the subject of the first such plan, and plans for other Fingal towns are likely to follow.

The completion of a pathway between the Sherlock Park entrance to the Town Park and the main entrance will include a new bridge across the Brook. It will help provide a safe active travel connection to the town centre. This is very welcome. However, it will need to be followed up with further safe crossings on Miller's Lane for those walking and cycling between the town centre and Hillside/Ballygossan.

Bike Repair: Skerries is now without a local bike shop, so in May, as part of Bike Week 2023 we held a first pop-up bike repair session at our Bike Shed (behind The Little Theatre), carrying out repairs on eight bikes brought in by their owners. We have also been working on bikes previously donated by Skerries residents, which will be passed on to new owners. We want to develop a community bike workshop as a place to share



bike repair and maintenance skills with those eager to learn such essentials as how to repair a puncture, fix the brakes and replace a worn-out chain. Email us at skerriescycling@gmail.com with your ideas and let us know if you would like to get involved.

Fun/Social Cycles. Last summer, we organised monthly cycles in the run up to EU Mobility Week in September 2022. Our first fun cycle of 2023 was on 20 May as part of Bike Week. Earlier this year, we took part in the St Patrick's Day Parade. SCI will also be participating in the Skerries Eco Festival planned for 1-3 September 2023.

Join us and help make cycling safer and more fun for everyone! "Like" Skerries Cycling Initiative on Facebook. Contact us to subscribe to the SCI newsletter or to join the SCI.

The Skerries Cycling Without Age trishaw is now operating and bookings can be made through the Fingal County Council Active Travel Mobility website. Several members of SCI have been trained as pilots for the trishaw.

Michael McKenna, Secretary, Skerries Cycling Initiative
Email: skerriescycling@gmail.com

Skerries Town Twinning



In July 2022, Skerries hosted 16 representatives from the Canton of Guichen (France). The group attended presentations and discussions on the work of Sustainable

Skerries and Skerries Response to Ukraine groups. They visited local attractions and



enjoyed an evening of traditional Irish entertainment as well as playing boules and learning about Currachaí na Sceirí (traditional rowing boats).

At the end of November, a group from Skerries visited the Canton of Guichen. Primarily, we were there for the launch of a joint **Photographic Exhibition** between Skerries, the Canton of Guichen and their Polish partner, Srem. The exhibition juxtaposes aspects of life in the three places across 17 diverse themes – such as habitat, housing, ecology, transport, education, local festivals etc. It is intended to mount the exhibition outdoors in various locations including Skerries. The group also visited a local school which has links with Skerries Community College. A highlight of the short visit was a concert to raise funds for Ukrainian refugees who had fled to Srem.

The year culminated with the lighting of four specially commissioned candles at Christmas as part of the **Bring Light to Ukraine** initiative. The candles displayed the national flower and flag of Ireland, France, Poland, and Ukraine. One candle was sent to the Canton of Guichen in France, another to Srem in Poland and the last one to Lviv in Ukraine. The candle initiative adopted and adapted the old Irish tradition of lighting a candle at Christmas and placing it in a window as a sign of friendship and welcome to those passing by. Other twinned communities across Europe joined us in lighting candles to show support and friendship for the people of Ukraine and to remember all those who live in areas of conflict. By lighting our candles, we were effectively shining a light of friendship across Europe from west to east.

A group from Skerries will visit Guichen from 29 June to 3 July 2023 to explore and share ideas about biodiversity, sustainability, and energy conservation. We are continuing our work to support contacts between local schools and also at individual level with our Language Buddies scheme.

For information about Skerries Town Twinning please contact skerriestwinning@gmail.com
Brendan Friel, Chair, Skerries Town Twinning Association

Skerries Age Friendly Town



Over the last year, Skerries Age Friendly Town facilitated the running of two smart technology classes for older people in conjunction with Age and Opportunity. They were very successful and were

attended by 24 people. We hope to have another one next year.

Skerries Community Car: The Community Car has been very busy, and many people have benefited from it. There have been many hospital trips and some social trips. Do not be afraid to book a local social trip. We do need some more drivers. Our aim is to have as many drivers as possible so as to reduce the burden on the present drivers. We also need more users to sign up to avail of the car. This is a unique project. Let's make maximum use of it. It has been shortlisted in two competitions this year. I am delighted to announce that GoCar has agreed to give us a bigger car with a bigger boot. This will help with walkers etc.

I would like to thank GoCar for the use of the car, Flexibus for the admin, Fingal County Council for their great support and of course the volunteer drivers who are amazing and the members of Skerries Age Friendly Town who promote the project locally and help with its smooth running.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BECOME A DRIVER OR SIGN UP TO USE THE CAR, PLEASE CALL CATHY AT 1 800 303 707

We will advertise any new project we have next year in the Church Bulletin and the SCA Newsflash.

If you would like to hear more about the Age Friendly initiative or would like to get involved, please don't hesitate to call 0863977118.

Mary Conway, Chair, Skerries Age Friendly Committee

Skerries Tidy Towns



Skerries Tidy Towns had another successful year, gaining 11 extra marks in the **Tidy Towns Competition** and another gold medal. Our small committee couldn't cover everything under the 8 specific headings involved in the entry form, so we would like to thank everyone

who contributed to the betterment of the town this year. If we know about your work, it gets a mention in the entry form. Special thanks to the **Men's Shed** who complete a list of work for us each year. Thanks too, to the **local schools** that support us through their work for their green flags.

Work continued throughout the year on the maintenance of bollards, railings, seats, and perennial beds. We clean road signs regularly. Graffiti is removed almost as soon as it appears. The constant problem of litter is tackled with the help of our hardworking **Adopt a Patch volunteers**. **Beach clean-ups** help to keep our beaches clear of litter. New bins were installed at several locations around the town.

The SEAL project, **Skerries Everyone Against Litter**, which we launched in St Patrick's senior school last year, has been extended to Scoil Realt na Mara.

At our instigation bottle banks have been installed in the Skerries Mills car park, replacing the unsightly and unsafe ones on the Barnageeragh Road.

As a result of our **Reusable Cup Campaign**, cafes in Skerries reported a 10% increase in the use of Keep Cups. Skerries Tidy Towns was nominated as a finalist in the Pakman Awards 2022

Wild birds of the Ballast Pit



Blackcap

A summer visitor from Iberia and North Africa although some overwinter here. The distinctive black cap of the male gives it its name. They feed mainly on insects and other invertebrates during the summer and on berries (ivy, rowan) in winter.



Whitethroat

One of two warbler species found the Ballast Pit. A summer visitor with a distinctive white throat. It feeds on insects and other invertebrates and breeds in various habitats, especially gorse. It winters in central and southern Africa.



Yellowhammer

Adult males in summer are a stunning yellow colour with a distinctive call. Feed on the grains of grasses and cereals but young are fed insects. The yellowhammer is red-listed and numbers are in decline nationally.



Kestrel

Usually seen hovering with fanned tail and rapid wing beats hunting for ground prey – small mammals, invertebrates, insects and small birds. They nest in trees, buildings or cracks in cliffs. Numbers are declining nationally.



for Waste Prevention as a result of this campaign. Most cafes now give a small discount when a reusable cup is used.

At our behest, members of **BirdWatch** Ireland Fingal Branch completed surveys of the Ballast Pit, the Mill Stream area and the South Strand and reported on the birds found in each area.

We worked with Fingal County Council to develop an **audio guide for Skerries**. This fascinating guide to the town can be heard by searching for "Abarta Heritage", Skerries audio guide on Spotify, Apple podcasts or Audible.

To support the Sustainable Skerries Large Carder Bee Project, we funded a **biodiversity corridor**, extending from the railway station/Ballast Pit to the Town Park along St Patrick's Close, Millhill, Greenlawns and the Dublin Road. Three free pollinator plants were offered to residents in these areas.

This year we ran a **competition in Skerries Community College on Biodiversity and Sustainability**. The winners in the biodiversity section will introduce a composting area, a bug hotel, and bee-friendly plants to the school. The winner in the sustainability project will make draft excluders for the doors and install draft-excluding tape to the windows in the coldest areas of the school.

The "**Stream Huggers**", an offshoot group of Skerries Tidy Towns, look after the Town Park area and endeavour to keep the stream rubbish free.

Our annual fundraiser is taking place at the moment. You can donate online by going to the **iDonate** link on our Facebook page. Alternatively, you could give your donation to any member of the committee or leave an envelope, addressed to us, into the Community Centre.

If you would like to **become involved** in the work of Skerries Tidy Towns in any way, maybe by adopting a patch or joining our work parties, we would be delighted to hear from you.

We thank everyone in Skerries for their continued support.

Maeve McGann, Chair, Skerries Tidy Towns
tidytowns@skerriesca.com

Skerries Autism Friendly Town.



2022 was another busy and rewarding year for our committee and for the people we serve i.e. the Autistic community and their families who live in Skerries and its

surrounds. We managed to deliver and enhance a number of activities which have been up and running for a few years such as 'Skerries Sailing for All' in partnership with Skerries Sailing Club and 'Sensory Santa' in partnership with Skerries Mills. We also started some new initiatives such as the 'Creative Cooking Initiative' and the 'All Inclusive Soccer Camp' which was run in partnership with Skerries Town.

In December 2022 we received the Community Engagement & Inclusivity Award from AsIAM - Ireland's Autism Charity. This is a powerful validation of the work of the committee and was a massive endorsement of the wonderful community spirit in Skerries. The many initiatives of the last year included 'Cook for Life' a creative cookery initiative with Orla Owens. This was very well received in terms of teaching life skills to those with additional needs & highlighting the therapeutic & sensory benefits of working through smell, taste & touch.

In May 2022, members of Skerries Autism Friendly Town joined with Skerries Youth Support Services, for their static cycle to raise much needed funds for their counselling services for young people. We are very supportive of this initiative & will seek to collaborate with them again in the future.

We are also hoping to have another successful coffee morning in the Sailing Club this year. Our Floraville sensory garden project, being done in partnership with Skerries Business Association, will be completed by end of 2023 and will provide a quiet space in the middle of Skerries.



We held a really successful and enjoyable All Inclusive Soccer Camp with Skerries Town FC in August for children with additional needs.

In August, we had a fantastic all inclusive summer camp as part of our Skerries Sailing Initiative. Over 40 children aged 7-17 attended sessions during 2022. It was important that the camps catered to all children with additional needs, including wheelchair users. Skerries Sailing Club won the Irish Sailing Inclusion Award for their work with Skerries Autism Friendly Town to introduce children with additional needs to sailing. We are very proud of this initiative, and we hope that other towns can adopt a similar one, so that a lot more children can experience sailing in their communities.

Contact: secretary@skerriesautismfriendly.ie
Ger O'Mahony, Chair, Skerries Autism Friendly Town

Skerries Neighbourhoods Network

Are you in a local WhatsApp or Facebook group? Then make sure your group is part of the Skerries Community Association's network of neighbourhoods / resident's associations and street groups, for information sharing and consultation at a truly local level. **Would you like to set up a neighbourhood group or residents' association?** Then look at our web page to get some ideas on how to get started: [SkerriesCA.com/Neighbour](https://skerriesca.com/Neighbour)

