

2020

Annual Review

BALLINA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Ballina
Chamber
Advancing business together

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A Year of Challenge, Adaptation and Resilience

Reflecting on a year that posed many unanticipated challenges for its members, which were responded to with powerful resilience, **Ballina Chamber** is looking ahead to a year of continuous adaptation but with some glimmer of hope for sectors adversely affected by the pandemic once the escalation of the virus can be tackled and vaccines more widely distributed.

Reviewing the outcomes of 2020, **Chamber Manager Mags Downey Martin**, said:

"Little did we know that the last weekend in February 2020 as Other Voices descended on our town, bringing hundreds of people and musicians and artists into Ballina and North Mayo, that that would be the last big party, in a town that loves to party.

COVID-19 was not even in our vocabulary when we set our plans for 2020, yet, by March, it was a term that the entire nation became familiar with. With our newly elected Chamber President, Gerry Luskin taking over the reins from outgoing President Hugh Rouse, little did we anticipate that we would be conducting our business out of the office; our team would be working remotely and our links with our members would be via computer screens.

Government intervention, via the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme (TWSS), the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP), Budget 2021 interventions, enabled many business doors to remain open but there is still a battle to be fought to return to pre COVID-19 status, as the Chamber continues to lobby for a widening of existing financial supports as our members say the supports are too restrictive. We call on Government to substantially rethink and refresh the range of COVID-19 supports available to businesses over the coming months.

"The distribution of the vaccine offers a glimmer of hope and our call to the entire population of the West region is to do everything within their power to prevent the spread of the virus so that our economy can revert to some form of operational normality in the shortest possible timeframe.

I would like to acknowledge and thank outgoing Chamber President Hugh Rouse (2018-2020) who was a great support to me and chamber staff during his term. Hugh's presidency resulted in a collaborative project in bringing Other Voices to Ballina, continued lobbying of the TII (Transport Infrastructure Ireland) Ballina Street Festival 2019, and ensuring North Mayo is represented on Mayo County Councils Strategic Policy Committees with 5 out of 6 representatives on the committees."



A Year of Challenge, Adaptation and Resilience - In Review

Describing 2020 as a year that was very different but rewarding from a Chamber attainment perspective,

Mags Downey Martin stated:

“Despite the disruption of COVID-19, we managed to deliver a continuous service to our members in 2020, albeit mostly from our virtual desks.

We do look forward to returning to our desks in a full-time capacity sometime in 2021. I would like to acknowledge and Thank my Chamber network colleagues and Chambers Ireland who have been an invaluable support to Ballina Chamber throughout 2020.”

Key Achievements

- Ballina Chamber maintained real-time communications with companies at the onset of and throughout COVID-19 to ensure that the supports on offer from Government were relevant and structured appropriately to meet its members’ needs.
- 30 business seminars and workshops on a very wide range of educational and information topics were delivered via Webinars.

Several new initiatives were delivered during 2020:

- Ballina Chamber HR: a dedicated HR Employment Law Support Service for members of Ballina Chamber, provided in partnership with Graphite & Peninsula,
- Business Support COVID-19 Hub, which offers weekly information on items of interest or concern to companies working through the pandemic via www.ballina.ie and members weekly Ezines, updates on Ballina Chamber social media platforms.



A Year of Challenge, Adaptation and Resilience - In Review

- Town Centre Covid Recovery Task Force with Mayo County Council & Ballina Chamber; preparing the town to reopen after lockdowns,
- Preparing for [Brexit section on ballina.ie](#)
- Other Voices returned to Ballina in 2020,
- Launch of Ballina - Ireland's Greenest Town project, collaborating with [Mary Robinson Centre](#) and [Ballina Green Town Team](#),
- Bank of Ireland Begin Together Awards Winners, winning funds supported Mayo North Promotions Office, Ballina Community Clean Up Group, Ballina Costume Company and Ballina Chamber,
- Shop Local Campaign 2020 supported by Ballina Chamber Retail Committee, resulting in sales of €140k Ballina Shop Local Vouchers,
- Ballina Chamber featured in Chambers Ireland [InBusiness magazine winter edition](#),
- Ballina Salmon Festival, coordinated by Ballina Chamber hosted two very successful events during 2020; online Fireworks Concert-four hour live music concert from Ballina Arts Centre featuring local performers and the River Moy Swim, welcoming 140 participants to Ballina, to enjoy one of Ireland's oldest open water swims,
- Launch of [Ballina 2023](#) 300th anniversary of the formal establishment of the town in 1723,
- Support Mayo County Council win the top accolade at the [2020 Excellence in Local Government Awards](#) by Chambers Ireland,
- Mayo Chambers Recovery taskforce in conjunction with Local Enterprise Office Mayo,
- Budget 2021: Ballina Chamber was a partner contributor to Chambers Ireland's Pre-Budget 2021 Submission to Government,
- Ballina Tourist Office opened for 8 months in 2020,
- Contribution to Chambers Ireland Guide to [Best Practice in Local Economic Development](#)
- National Development Plan (WIP for January 2021)



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Ballina Chamber compiled and submitted comprehensive submissions on behalf of its members to Government, Mayo County Council and the National Transport Authority, namely;

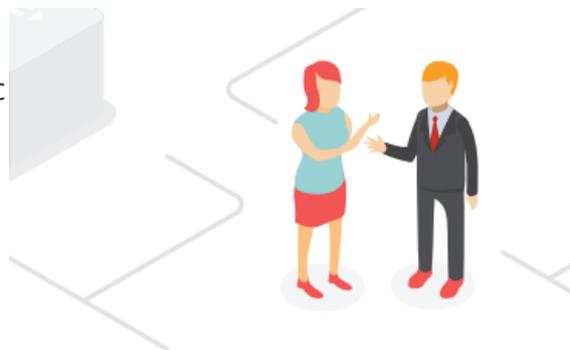
ISSUES

RELATED TO COVID-19 AND ITS IMPACT ON SMES

Extension of COVID-19 ReStart programme to medium-sized enterprises not supported by State Agencies,
EU Community Recovery Fund and its allocation to Ireland/North-West region,
Wage Subsidy Scheme,
Rates Waiver,
Lobbying Government to respond to the challenges currently facing Ireland West Airport Knock,
Importance of Hospitality sector as a driver of economic activity / support for IWAK.
National Development Plan - Lobby for infrastructural imbalances, eg N26, for future of SME's in North West.

Supporting Ballina's Future

Completion of Ballina Town Centre Health Check; supported by Ballina Chamber, Heritage Council and Mayo County Council,
Salmon Tech Valley Plan, support draft strategy spatial and economic cluster plan for North Mayo,
Ballina Vacancy and Dereliction Task Force,
Supporting festivals to ensure their future; Ballina Fringe Festival & Ballina Salmon Festival,
[Ballina Open for Business](#) promotional video in conjunction with IMayo TV,
Shop Local [Ballina Click & Collect Christmas promotional video](#),
Ballina 2023; Vision & Legacy Steering Committee, creating a vision and legacy project for Ballina beyond 2023,
Mayo County Development Plan Public Consultation.



**Budget 2021
Submission**



Looking ahead to 2021 and beyond, Mags Downey states:

“We will continue to monitor the economic landscape and, either singularly or in collaboration with the Chambers in Mayo; Ballyhaunis, Castlebar, Claremorris, Erris and Westport and regional Chambers in Galway, Letterkenny and Sligo, continue to keep pressing issues to the fore at Government and local representative levels to ensure that all businesses get the support they require to operate to their optimal, as well as plan ahead of 2021.

Our focus as a Chamber, whose remit is to support business, will be on helping our members in whatever way we can to overcome the continuing challenges they face.

We will also be monitoring the impact Brexit may have on our members’ operations and most importantly continue to lobby for maximum Government Covid supports for SME’s and those sectors most affected by Covid, in particular the Hospitality sector.”

Ballina Chamber President, Gerry Luskin states;

“In what can only be described as an unprecedented year for our town and country, I want to thank members of our chamber executive; Brian Hopkins Vice President, Tracey Glacken Treasurer, Mariea Carr Secretary and Patrick Hallahan PRO and the wider Chamber council for their continued support of Ballina Chamber throughout 2020.

Ballina Chamber has never worked as hard in supporting our members throughout this pandemic year. We continue to reiterate the Shop Local message and I will continue to ask the community to think local when shopping in 2021; by supporting our local businesses, we support those that give back to our community, we keep people in jobs, and we keep our town centre alive, please shop local where possible.

Ballina Chamber will also continue to lobby on behalf of its members at national level, in relation to recent announcements by Government that COVID business grants will be expanded, as we cannot afford to under-react to the challenge facing us. The coming months will be extremely challenging and local economies must be supported.

A word of thanks to Mayo County Council and Ballina Municipal District Council staff, Cathaoirleach Cllr Weir, Cllr Duffy, Cllr Loftus, Cllr Munnely, Cllr Reape for their continued support and Deputy Dara Calleary TD. Thank you to our strategic working partners Mayo North Promotions Office, members of the Vacancy & Dereliction Task Force, Ballina 2023 Committee members and all the great voluntary and sporting groups and clubs; all working hard to ensure Ballina is a great place to live, work and enjoy.

Ní neart go cur le chéile.”

Gerry