

## Concerns over Ballybricken Mural



Stunning art work by Dermot McConaghy (ArtDMC) on Tramore's Main Street. Concern has been expressed for a mural set to be created in Ballybricken as part of the Waterford Walls Festival.

Concerns have been expressed over a mural planned for Ballybricken as part of the Waterford Walls project.

Cllr John Cummins (FG) believes there's a prospect that the mural in question could be viewed as "offensive" by some people. He raised his concerns at the July Metropolitan District meeting of Waterford City & County Council where he asked if there was any vetting process in relation to the Waterford Walls artwork.

"Is there anybody within the council that vets what's going to go on any particular premises?" he queried.

"It has come to my attention that there are plans for what some people may perceive as an offensive satirical piece for a building in Ballybricken," he explained. Waterford Walls was founded in 2015 aimed at bringing colour back into the city. Through the project, which received significant national media coverage, murals by local and international artists were created on 25 derelict buildings in Waterford.

This summer, from August 25th-28th, 40 new murals will be created. Responding to Cllr Cummins' concerns, Director of Economic Development Lar Power said Waterford City & County Council is "not in the business of vetting" any of the work of the artists involved in the Waterford Walls project.

He described Waterford Walls as "a very good project", adding that people's opinions on art are "very subjective".

On foot of Mr Power's comments, Cllr Cummins told The Munster Express that he believes there should be greater liaison with Waterford City & County Council and local communities in relation to Waterford Walls.

However, he stressed that he is a supporter of the project and has always been a keen promoter of the arts in Waterford.

When contacted by this newspaper, Waterford Walls' Megan Winters stated: "Our reputation is everything to us and we are delighted to have the opportunity to show how hard we work to make our festival an enjoyable one for all.

"Our mission is to improve the day to day experience of Waterford City for its residents and visitors, bringing unique and innovative art to our streets for everyone to enjoy. Waterford Walls works with professional, experienced artists who regularly create beautiful murals for public spaces in Ireland and internationally. The team work hard to ensure that the pieces of art are in good taste and enhance the surroundings, and our artists take part in extensive consultation with our team and with the owner of the building they are to paint on to ensure only the highest quality art makes it into our city."

She added: "What has really amazed us is how much our artists fall in love with Waterford when they are here. Every artist tells us how much they enjoy the city, how the people of Waterford make them feel welcome and appreciated, and how their art becomes a labour of love. Truly, our artists regard Waterford as a second home and are proud to create art that enhances and respects our beautiful and ancient city, as are the whole Waterford Walls team. To date, the murals painted by Waterford Walls artists have been very well received by the public in locations across the city and county and we are sure that our next festival, to be held from August 25th to 28th and will be another enormous success."

The Munster Express understands that the "offensive" mural in question relates to Ballybricken's historic pig trade.

Last month, Waterford Civic Trust (WCT) officially unveiled one of their heritage Blue Plaques in Ballybricken, marking the headquarters of the Pig Buyers' Association (1884-1935).

At that unveiling, former Metropolitan Mayor Cllr Eamon Quinlan (FF) spoke of the important role played by pig buyers in Ballybricken and how "they were central to the economy of Waterford, and played a major role in its social and political life."