

# IRFU Welcoming Clubs Programme



## Case Study #3: Killarney RFC

Rugby Union has been played “on and off” in Killarney since the beginning of the Century but it has never been on a continuous basis. The clubs have come and gone but it hasn’t been until recent times that a club has been in a position to own a ground with the aim of being “in Killarney to stay”. The current club which was established in 1983 but the momentum really began to pick up in 2006 when a small group of very “driven” individual’s decided that the time was right to grow a club to be proud of. They recognised that this would be a “marathon not a sprint” and after many years of hard work and development they are, in 2012, close to achieving their goal of owning their own home ground and club house.

### **The Club Today**

The ethos of Killarney RFC is based upon a) community involvement – the club works to create visibility and reputation within the community b) doing things properly – they learn from best practice, focus on fulfilling the needs of the players, young and old. All teams have a mentor as well as coaches and the club has worked to develop a group of qualified referees within the club. There are over 200 young people playing in the club and last year they won the Munster Mini Club of the Year even though their players train on a public park without any facilities. C) Enjoyment – there are a wide range of social activities and this ethos of enjoyment has evolved over many years. In the 1970’s there wasn’t a rugby club in Killarney but there was a “Rugby club New Year’s Eve Dance” which was run by rugby enthusiasts and which attracted over 300 people d) commitment – the volunteers and especially the recent group of volunteers show a huge amount of commitment.

### **The Facilities Today**

The clubs plays its First XV games on pitches which are rented from the Health Service Executive, the players change in converted containers and the club house is a local hotel. The mini section attracts over 150 participants but they aren’t able to play at this ground. They train and play in a public park where there aren’t any changing facilities or showers!

### **Facilities – The future**

Land is scarce around Killarney with the National Park on one side and lakes on other sides which account for much of the open spaces around the town. Over 50 potential sites had been visited and considered by the club before a site 3 km from the centre of the town was found. The 13 acres site at Aghadoe didn’t come cheaply (over e 400, 000 but a decision has been made and an agreement s to buy the land has been reached. The site will provide 4 pitches (one floodlit) and a club house (no bar will be included in the club house since the local hotel provides a great post match base and the drink/driving laws will affect the numbers who stay/visit the club).Already other sporting clubs based in the town are showing an interest in sharing the facilities and there are plans to have a “trim trail” around the grounds.

The club are optimistic that a combination of the funds already raised, an AIB facility, an IRFU loan and a potential Sports Capital Grant will get them close to the financial target. In the meantime the “fund raising machine will continue to “keep rolling!

### **Fund Raising**

The Club has an ethos that if it is visible and supportive within the local community then in return the community will support the club. Therefore the club does take tables at local fund raising events, it has a float at the St Patricks day parade, they ran a water station at the local marathon, stewarded a hole at the Irish Open, have sponsored a race at the local race meeting and have provided coaches for the local schools. In return they have found that the local community provides them with outstanding support. Examples of their fund raising activities are:

Household Goods Auction – they spent two days collecting unwanted furniture and household goods from the community. They then held an auction at which they made over e6000.

“Surviving Santa Ponsa” - the club has run two comedy evenings using a comedy duo that were featured on the Dragons Den programme. Each of the evening attracted an audience from across the community and raised over e3000.

[http://www.irishrugby.ie/club/welcomingclubs/welcoming\\_clubs\\_index.php](http://www.irishrugby.ie/club/welcomingclubs/welcoming_clubs_index.php)

*IRFU Welcoming Clubs Programme; An IRFU initiative which provides clubs with a road map and training for the “team off the field” to assist them in running their sports club as efficiently as possible.*

Wine and Art Evening – This fund raising event is run in Killarney but not by the club, however it may well be a suitable event for other rugby clubs to run. Each year there is a “wine and art” evening which is run in one of the local hotels. Regional artists are invited to exhibit their paintings and if any are sold they give a percentage to the fund. The wine is donated and therefore once the entry fee of e15 is paid the wine is free to all present. There is also an auction of donated paintings from well-known artists. The first time that this was run in Killarney the fund raised over e20, 000 and is now seen as one of the social events of the year.

Business Support – the main fund raising drive is to generate income for the new ground. A brochure has been produced which outlines the plans and the benefits to the people of Killarney and how the businesses can support the strategy. The club will be attempting to personally deliver over 900 of these brochures during the coming months. The feedback has already been excellent with donations starting to come in and businesses coming forward to sponsor the club.

### **Governance**

During the last few years the club has been run and has been developed through the efforts of a small group of totally dedicated individuals. However, the club is actively growing the group of volunteers needed in preparation for the next move when the club will own its own clubhouse and grounds for the first time. A recent meeting attracted over 50 individuals who came to hear about the plans for the club and many of them left the meeting having committed to play a role in the development of the new club.

### **Key Points from Killarney**

- When you are developing a club recognise that it is a “marathon not a sprint”
- Do things properly; don’t take any short cuts since in the long run this will pay off
- Spend time and effort being “visible and supportive” within your local community.
- Recognise the “wants and needs” of your players, especially the young people who are the future of the club