

## **“PEOPLE AT A CROSSROADS – THE LIVING VILLAGE CAMPAIGN”**

### **Background and Context**

Phizzfest was established in 2009, as the local community response to the recession and the shelving of the Local Area Plan, which was to have regenerated our neighbourhood. It was set up with the aim of uniting the community through the creative arts and restoring pride of place in Phibsborough, an area that had been neglected for years. To decide to run an annual arts festival in an area devoid of any community or arts space whatsoever was an extremely ambitious aspiration but we believed in the project and just what can be achieved when there's a will to do it and people work together.

Phizzfest is now an award winning festival and an established brand with Arts Council recognition, support from Dublin City Council and Waterways Ireland.

In the past 5 years, Phizzfest has contributed hugely to the cultural and social life of Phibsborough, has engaged and worked with all of the institutions and community groups in the area to create a festival of quality arts events which has now put Phibsborough on the map for all the right reasons. In 2014 we held a number of visual arts projects which looked at our built environment, in particular, Artist Dorothy Smith's "Put Yourself in the Picture" which asked people to take a photo of themselves beside something they wanted to see changed in Phibsborough, to say why they wanted it changed and what they would like to see in its place. A number of clear themes emerged from that project which prompted the public meeting we held at the end of May last year - "We Need to Talk about Phibsborough". There were two presentations at that meeting, one from a group of Visual Communications Students at DIT, with whom we had collaborated to "rebrand" Phibsborough. Dorothy also presented the themes which emerged from Put Yourself in the Picture.

The environmental strand of Phizzfest was established at that meeting. It was decided to set up a Tidy Towns Committee and a sub group also formed to look at the issues for pedestrians and cyclists circulating safely in Phibsborough where motorised traffic is given priority over all other road users through our village. Tidy Towns is already active, has applied for community funding, done an audit of the litter black spots, carried out two Saturday morning clean-ups, has a strategy for bringing local businesses on board and is about to launch a poster campaign. The other impetus for all of this is of course the fact that we are all very aware that Phibsborough is on the approach route to Glasnevin Cemetery for the centenary celebrations in 2016.

On the traffic side, we began by conducting a survey at Doyle's Corner to establish the extent of the problem of cars running red lights. We spent 30 minutes a day at Doyle's Corner, at different times of the day, over a 7 day period in November and during that time, we documented 251 vehicles breaking red lights, including Dublin Bus, Bus Eireann and light and heavy commercial vehicles. We discovered that traffic is routinely running the red light at almost every single light change. If these numbers are extrapolated out over a full week we are looking at over 11,000 cars breaking lights with impunity at one junction alone in Phibsborough, seriously endangering the lives of pedestrians. A similar situation exists at Cross Guns Bridge and the junction of Connaught St and Phibsborough Road. We posted information on our survey on our Facebook page and received such a groundswell of support that we decided to set up a petition to assess the extent of local interest in improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. We collected over 1,000 signatures from people who live and work in Phibsborough.

We also received letters of support for our campaign from:

The Chief Executive of the Mater Hospital

CEO of Glasnevin Trust

President of Bohemian Football Club

Principal of Dublin 7 Educate Together NS

Principal of Mount Temple Comprehensive School

Principal of North Dublin National School Project

Parish Priest of St Peter's

D7 Business Association

Shandon Residents Association

Woodstock Café

So as you can see there is overwhelming support from all stakeholders in the area to reclaim our village and there's never been a better time to do it with the proposal to develop Dalymount Park as a municipal amenity site to include Bohemians and Shelbourne FC, along with community facilities and with amendments to the extended Local Area Plan now under consideration.

We are People at a Crossroads and we have a great opportunity now to re-imagine Phibsborough as a place which recognises the rights of pedestrians and cyclists and provides community amenities for its residents.