



# COMHALTAS

## THE LIVING TRADITION

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### **ANNOUNCEMENT OF GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR COMHALTAS IN CLARE AUBURN LODGE HOTEL, ENNIS, SATURDAY, 25<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 8pm**

Cois na hAbhna, the Clare Comhaltas cultural centre in Ennis, will be one of the main beneficiaries of the Comhaltas Development Programme. The centre has been designated as one of eight Regional Resource Centres for the promotion of Irish cultural traditions.

Cois na hAbhna is at present undergoing major enhancement work and will be completed in time for Fleadh Nua 2007.

Frank Whelan, Chairman of the Cois na hAbhna development board said: **“This is an acknowledgement of generous voluntary service and will enable us to build on the solid foundation bequeathed to us by the great men and women of the past. This is good news for our cultural movement and we look forward with confidence to the future”.**

The old church in Kilrush, which has been donated by the Church of Ireland to Comhaltas, will also benefit as an outreach centre under the Development Programme.

The Programme, which is being grant-aided by the Government and supported with buildings from a number of sources, will have a price tag of over € 65m. This will be the most expansive programme ever for the propagation of cultural traditions in the history of the State.

The initial grant-aid for Cois na hAbhna and Kilrush will be in the region of € 2.5m.

The Director General of Comhaltas, Senator Labhrás Ó Murchú said: **“This is a new dawn for Comhaltas. It is a huge boost for our cultural identity as a distinctive nation. It will empower the meitheal of volunteers to develop cultural potential at community level, which might otherwise remain dormant. The result of the new Comhaltas Development Programme will in time impact on every region of Ireland and throughout the Irish**

**Diaspora. This is an official acknowledgement of the successful and valuable work done by the thousands of Comhaltas volunteers at community level for over half a century.”**

The Government funding for Comhaltas will help resource the new Development Programme of Comhaltas at home and abroad. The Programme includes the provision of Regional Resource Centres based in Dundalk, Dublin (Monkstown and Clontarf), Cashel, Ennis, Gurteen (Co. Sligo), and Mullingar.

There will also be one in the North of Ireland. In addition there will be several outreach centres.

The Programme is rooted in the community and will be sustained and developed by a number of imaginative and complementary projects. It will involve the decentralisation of several Comhaltas elements i.e. education, archives, merchandise and performance outlets. It will be driven by regionally based “meitheal” teams.

The mission statement for the Comhaltas Development Programme is that *“cultural traditions should be an enriching part of the lives of Irish people everywhere, particularly our young people; they should be a living, highly visible and vibrant part of society; they should be easily accessible to all; and their unique social, cultural and economic benefits should be fully realised by communities and individuals throughout the country and in Irish communities abroad”*.

Comhaltas, which was founded in 1951, has met with significant success at home and abroad. There are now 400 branches in 15 countries on 4 continents and provides cultural services to 2m people each year. It has 1,000 classes each week passing on our cultural traditions to the young generation.

Comhaltas makes a major contribution to the tourism industry through 40 Fleadhanna Cheoil each year; the nationwide Seisiún network, céilithe, concert tours and sessions. Comhaltas makes a huge contribution to the cultural and social life of Ireland.

It has an impressive youth programme and young people are involved at every level of the movement. Over 25,000 perform at Fleadhanna Cheoil each year.