



STATEMENT FROM COMHALTAS CEOLTÓIRÍ ÉIREANN ARDCHOMHAIRLE
Ref: Clontarf CCÉ / Clasaç

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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In response to misinformed speculation regarding Clontarf CCE and the Comhaltas Clasaç project at Clontarf, the Ardchomhairle of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann feels obliged to release the following information;

- The Ardchomhairle of Comhaltas which is elected by the general membership through the Provincial and Annual Congress structures is charged with the proper governance of the organisation including financial matters and the rights of individual members.
- Clontarf CCE set up the Clasaç sub-committee to spearhead the building of a centre on Dublin's Northside. The Clasaç building was subsequently to be recognised as one of seven Regional Resource Centres of Comhaltas and funded as such by the Ardchomhairle under the grant - aided Development Programme of the organisation. The local Comhaltas would also have a home in the centre. The local committee - as was the case with the other regional centres - was expected through fundraising to make a substantial contribution. This never materialised.
- The cost of the project rose to over € 9,000,000. The Clasaç development committee splintered with most of the early advocates of the project resigning, claiming mismanagement of the project and raising questions regarding financial matters.
- Several other centres which were scheduled to receive funding under the Development Programme agreed to forego this funding to help prop up the Clasaç project.
- The Trustees of Comhaltas carried out an investigation of the project and issued a highly critical report, which was adopted by the Ardchomhairle. This report was discussed with representatives of the local committee who accepted its findings.
- This situation reached crisis point in December 2007 when debts of almost € 2,000,000 incurred by the Clasaç committee, remained unpaid. Several small contractors who have not been paid for their work on the project were facing financial ruin. The chairman of the local branch of Comhaltas who was also

chairman of the Clasaic development committee, Maurice Mullen, in the presence of a professional arbitrator on the 7th of December 2007, met with the main contractor and undertook to pay a portion of the outstanding debts prior to Christmas. This payment never materialised.

- The Ardchomhairle at this stage had no option but to intervene. It established a modus operandi to stabilise the situation. This is chaired by the Secretary General of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and includes the Treasurer General. The Ardchomhairle borrowed € 2,000,000 from the bank to pay the outstanding debts.
- The local committee initiated an application for refund of VAT. It has refused to provide the Ardchomhairle with all documentation and information relating to the basis and process of the application by the local committee to the Revenue Commissioners for refund of VAT, which had in fact been paid by the Ardchomhairle. We have not had sight of the invoices submitted to substantiate this VAT claim. As the VAT had already been paid to Comhaltas by way of grant-aid, a refund would be deemed to be double funding and the local committee was informed of this. Invoices for all work carried out were in the name of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, 32 Belgrave Square, Monkstown, Co Dublin, which were paid by Comhaltas and re-claimed as such (including VAT) from the Department which was supplied with original copies of the invoices and the Architect's Certificates which were audited and certified.
- In the course of the process initiated by the Ardchomhairle to investigate and regularise all the financial dealings of the project, a decision was made by some people in the local committee to deregister the VAT status and the refund received was returned to the Revenue Commissioners. This fundamental and serious move did not have the required sanction of a properly convened meeting of the full membership of the local branch.
- The various directives issued unanimously by the 31- member Ardchomhairle were not brought, within the specified time, to a properly convened meeting of the full membership of the branch to allow them to have an input into their future within the organisation. This was a clear breach of the organisation's Bunreacht.
- The situation has now been stabilised; the Centre is in the process of completion and will be opened later in the year.
- It is a source of regret to the Ardchomhairle that the local committee did not avail of the several opportunities provided to regularise its position within the organisation; take responsibility for its actions and be in full conformity with the Bunreacht of Comhaltas.
- The Ardchomhairle, following several postponements of its directives was left with no choice but to fulfil its obligations and dissolve the branch. However there will be a modus operandi to acknowledge and recognise the members who were not afforded their constitutional rights to have an input into the matters under review.