

**PRESS RELEASE**

**28 May 2024**

**Minister of State James Browne TD, performs official opening of Pearse Park Sensory Garden, New Ross**

Wexford County Council is delighted to announce that the official opening of Pearse Park Sensory Garden, New Ross, took place on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2024, with the new garden then open to the public to enjoy later that day.

This project commenced in early December 2023, in the wonderful five-acre site of Pearse Park, in the heart of New Ross town. This multi award winning, green flag park boasts an array of facilities, and now includes this fully accessible, pocket-sized Sensory Garden, nestled in a sun trapped corner of the park.

Pearse Park Sensory Garden was funded through the Community Recognition Fund 2023, with further funding from Wexford County Council, supported by the New Ross Municipal District Elected Members. The Community Recognition Fund was introduced to recognise the efforts made by communities in welcoming and supporting people coming to Ireland. This major initiative is designed to support and reward communities like New Ross for welcoming the families and citizens of Ukraine and other countries.

The official opening was performed by Minister of State at the Department of Justice James Browne T.D., in the presence of Councillor John Fleming, Cathaoirleach of Wexford County Council, Councillor Anthony Connick, Cathaoirleach of New Ross Municipal District as well as the Elected members of Wexford County Council, Wexford Oireachtas members and invited guests. District Manager Alan Fitzhenry was MC for the event, and the children of the Catherine McCauley School in New Ross joined the guests and were the first to use the garden.

The inspiration and drive for such an amazing facility came from the staff of New Ross Municipal District, as it had been a wish of their late colleague Pat Laffan RIP to see a specialist garden in Pearse Park.

The garden has been designed to provide a place where children and adults alike can explore their five senses, while interacting with nature. This fully accessible park allows you to engage in and enjoy a myriad of sensory experiences. The design and layout provide a stimulating journey, heightening awareness and bringing peace and happiness to all who enter.



( L to R) Cllr. Michael Sheehan, Cllr. Pat Barden, Cllr .Michael Whelan, Cllr . Anthony Connick ( Cathaoirleach New Ross MD ), Minister of State James Browne, Cllr. John Fleming ( Cathaoirleach WCC), Cllr. Brídín Murphy.

This project has been specifically designed for children and people with neurodiverse conditions including those living with dementia. They hope this garden will act as a safe space for all who enter and aid those who care for them.

Speaking about Pearse Park Sensory Garden, Minister Browne said, *“The sensory garden is a terrific addition to New Ross town. It’s a wonderful inclusive facility and it was made possible through Government funding, Wexford County Council funding and local businesses voluntarily supporting using time, talent and materials. I commend everyone who had a part in its success as it is a fitting tribute to Pat Laffan, who sadly passed away in 2022, and advocated for the creation of a sensory garden in Pearse Park.”*

Also attending the official opening on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup>, Cllr John Fleming, Cathaoirleach of Wexford County Council, said *“I am delighted as Cathaoirleach of Wexford County Council, to see the opening of this wonderful park, particularly during my tenure as Cathaoirleach of Wexford County Council, and in my own District. Thank you to Minister Humphreys for providing funding through the Community Recognition Fund 2023 for the park and to my fellow Wexford County Councillors for their funding allocation towards it also. This will be one of my last official duties as Cathaoirleach and to see the garden finished now to such a high standard brings me great pride”.*

Cllr Anthony Connick, Cathaoirleach of New Ross Municipal District said, *“I would like to welcome you all to the Sensory Garden which will be a beautiful addition to Pearse Park. Thank you to all involved in this project, especially Minister Humphreys’ Department who provided the funding, along with Wexford County Council and my fellow Councillors. I want to especially mention the many local businesses who donated their time, skillset, and products to make this a really special place. I think this instils confidence, that New Ross Town still has a great sense of community.”*

Alan Fitzhenry, District Manager New Ross Municipal District said *”I am delighted to see this incredible project opening for the public to enjoy. The Sensory Garden has been a serious team effort from everyone at New Ross Municipal District, working with local businesses and tradespeople. I would like to sincerely thank all my staff for their tireless work on this project. Seeing the reaction from the children today has been wonderful. This project has been specifically designed for children and people with neurodiverse conditions including those living with dementia. We hope this garden will act as a safe space for all who enter and aid those who care for them, for many years to come.”*



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