

MOUNT MELLERAY TO CLOSE

Community devastated by decision

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PAUL MOONEY
AND THOMAS KEANE

"After much reflection and soul searching we as an Order have had to make some very difficult decisions with the aim of ensuring a future for Cistercian life in Ireland. We have been confronted with these difficult decisions as we address the reality of falling numbers and ageing communities; issues which other

similar communities are also addressing at this time," said Dom Rufus.

"No final decisions have been taken at this stage regarding any of the properties which may be vacated in the near future, however as decisions are made further announcements will be forthcoming."

Dom Rufus added: "This is a difficult time for all the members of our new Community as we strive to meet the challenge of our present day realities. It is especially difficult for those who have spent their entire lives in a

specific monastery and must now adjust to these changed circumstances. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank our staff, some of whom who have been with us and supported us for decades, and the many other loyal volunteers and friends who will be affected by these developments".

Michael O'Rourke, a local resident and chairperson of Melleray Community Centre told The Munster Express that it is a "mega blow" for the community.

"The community is totally devastated at the news," Mr.

O'Rourke said. "It's like a death struck us, such is the shock; and it is devastating to the community in Melleray, but also worldwide."

He noted that while a final decision hasn't been made in regards to where the monks will reside, he said the community in Melleray is hopeful that the monks will return to Mount Melleray.

"It is such a sad occasion, but we are still hopeful for the future of Mount Melleray," Mr. O'Rourke said.

Mr. O'Rourke worked for 17 years at the Abbey more than 40

years ago – repairing machines and tractors and welding.

"At that time, there were over 120 monks residing at Mount Melleray. Over the years, you could see the number of monks dwindling," he said.

It is unclear what will happen if the religious order completely vacates Mount Melleray – it is understood the land on which the Abbey was built in 1833 was donated by the Keane family of Cappoquin House for a nominal rent. When the Abbey was built, the honour of laying the foundation stone was

bestowed on the landlord, Sir Richard Keane.

There are also question marks hanging over the use of property and facilities which are based within the grounds of Mount Melleray – the community centre is based on the grounds and leased from the monastery, while the community GAA pitch is also based within Abbey property.

Mr. O'Rourke said there is a lot of property in Mount Melleray which includes the college, monastery buildings, a café and souvenir shop, a museum and guest houses.

"The guest houses would be used by people on Retreat. Just last weekend there were ten people who stayed, from Friday to Sunday," Mr. O'Rourke said.

"Every Sunday morning, Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meet at the Lodge for tea and a chat. There are people who aren't well who visit the Abbey for blessings. Other people visit to chat with the monks; attend Mass; and to visit the graveyard – there are some local people buried there and some people from outside the area who are also buried there. This closure will be a big blow to those people," Mr. O'Rourke said.

The moving of the Cistercians away from Mount Melleray in January is the third community to end a presence in the Diocese of Waterford and Lismore in the last number of years.

Two years ago, the Dominicans and Franciscans ended nearly 800 years each of their stay in the Diocese, when they closed their doors in Waterford City and Clonmel.



Mount Melleray Abbey.

PUBLIC NOTICE

EVENT LICENCE APPLICATION

Pod Festivals Ltd. hereby gives notice to Waterford City & County Council of proposed All Together Now Music & Arts Camping Festival for 2 year licence to take place 1st, 2nd, 3rd August 2025 and 31st July, 1st, 2nd August 2026. This notice complies with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage guidelines and Part XVI of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The event will comprise of live music entertainment to be held at the Curraghmore House, Portlaoise, Co Waterford with an anticipated attendance of c.30,000 tickets per day 2025 and c.35,000 tickets per day 2026. Associated Camping / Campervan/Parking access with facilities will be made available from 2pm Thursday 31st July to 2pm Monday 4th August 2025 and 2pm Thursday 30th July to 2pm Monday 3rd August 2026. The event licence application may be inspected at the offices of Waterford County Council, Planning Department, Menapia Building, The Mall, Waterford during office hours (Monday to Friday 9.30am – 1pm and 1pm to 4pm), for a 5-week period commencing from December 2nd, 2024. Submissions or observations may be made in writing to Waterford City & County Council planning dept, Menapia building, The Mall Waterford on or before 4pm December Friday 20th, 2024. **Signed: Pod Festivals Ltd. Date 26.11.24**



Directional signage pointing people towards the café, gift shop, heritage centre and toilets. The signage also directs people towards the nearby St. Declan's Way Pilgrimage route.