

Irish Rambling House are the first in 'Make it Happen' bid

By DEARBHLA
ACHESON

THE Irish Rambling House was the first group to apply for the Limerick Leader/Combined Insurance €20,000 Make it Happen Community Give-away.

Cash from the prize fund will be awarded to organisations or individuals who are involved in projects to benefit the community.

The Make it Happen awards are the first of their kind involving a newspaper in Ireland. Combined Insurance were previously involved in similar projects in the United Kingdom.

Judges from the Limerick Leader and Combined Insurance will consider all applications, and divide the cash between the most worthy causes.

The first application for the awards from anywhere in Limerick was the Irish Rambling House, a non-profit community based project, which promotes traditional music, song, dance and storytelling.

"We have played a significant part in showing the world that Limerick's own unique style of traditional music and entertainment can hold its own with its more high profile neighbours of Clare and Kerry," said former Mayor of Limerick Joe Harrington of the Irish Rambling House.

He explained that one of their methods of doing this has been to organise tours of Britain, where Limerick performers bring traditional entertainment to the exiles.

Their audiences in Britain include many Limerick exiles.

"This project has given many of Limerick's young and not so young entertainers a prestigious stage on which to showcase their talents," he added.

The touring group consists of up to 30 people, mostly from the city and its environs, and, apart from enjoying the three-hour show the exiles love meeting the cast and con-

nections with home are always made.

"Among the Irish community in Britain the Irish Rambling House is seen as the biggest and best show of its kind to come over and we have now flown the flag for Limerick in six visits over four years. We have carried goodwill messages from city and county councils to numerous mayors of the cities we have visited and have always made a point of being good ambassadors for our area when on tour." Mr Harrington commented.

Their tour is used by the exiles to raise funds for their centres and during its latest tour the Irish Rambling House raised €2,200 through a sell-out concert in Harrow for the Cricklewood Homeless Concern, an organisation working to provide a premises for the homeless.

"We used our own resources from fund-raising, door receipts etc to cover hotel accommodation and meals. Bus Eireann/Eurolines sponsored the coach on all of these tours, with sponsorship valued at €5,000," he added.

In Ireland, the Eurolines operation was managed from Limerick, and that was why they gave this substantial sponsorship to what they saw as a local project. "Unfortunately, the management of Eurolines is now based in Dublin and they tell us that they have adapted a different marketing strategy that will not include the Irish Rambling House," Mr Harrington explained.

He continued: "The loss of Eurolines sponsorship leaves us substantially short of the funding we need to undertake these tours. We are applying to the Make it Happen Fund to help us make our next tour happen and allow us to continue providing Limerick traditional talent with an important outlet, and exiles with an important access to traditional entertainment from home, and an event which they can use as a fundraiser for their own work over there."

The Irish Rambling Tours of Britain are generally six days long



involving five concerts at venues from Bolton to London. "We have invitations from a number of venues, old and new, for the autumn, including two shows at Harrow on consecutive nights which will raise funds for Harrow Irish community project," Mr Harrington added.

