Visiting Committee Annual Report 2018

Shelton Abbey
Visiting Committee Annual Report 2018

The Visiting Committee has pleasure in presenting their annual report for the year ending 2018.

The Visiting Committee met on eleven occasions throughout the year and members occasionally made unannounced visits. On each occasion the committee members were welcomed and facilitated with free access to all areas of the estate and chatted informally with prisoners as they toured the site. A total of seven prisoners sought to meet with the committee during the year. We are pleased to report that the committee continues to be chaired by Mr. Thomas Gregan, whose request to appoint more members, to ensure the minimum quorum to conduct meetings, was granted. Ms Geraldine Graham was appointed to the Committee in May 2018. However, Mr. Richard Codd’s term of office ended in December 2018 and a further appointment is awaited.

The committee is pleased to report local management's continued commitment to deliver the highest standards in offender sentence management. With ongoing financial limitations being imposed across the prison service, it is a credit to the excellent work and leadership of immediate past Governor Kathy Hoctor and all the team that the centre continues to maintain and introduce new initiatives. This year has witnessed a continued increase in positive interaction with the community and such interaction with local community projects has proven to be a real success.

A very successful open day was held on July 11th, when the grounds of Shelton Abbey were opened to the public for the afternoon. The opportunity showcased the productivity of the centre, with picnic benches, tables and produce from the farm and polytunnels available for sale. All the proceeds of the day went to Wicklow Hospice.
Involvement with the Tinahely Show, for the 5th consecutive year, proved to be another success, with a total of twelve offenders granted day release to assist the voluntary committee deliver an excellent show once again. Such an occasion provides the offenders with the opportunity to use and display their skills and helps them maintain their proficiency in their craft. Appreciation for their time and effort was displayed by an invitation to attend Christmas lunch with the Tinahely Show committee. Five of the twelve volunteers attended on the day as the other seven are in employment. The five in question are in fulltime education.

In December, the centre supplied goods to support Wicklow Hospice Christmas Fair and also held an in-house craft fair supported by staff and prisoners, the proceeds of which went to Pieta House. Logs from felled trees on the estate were sold to raise funds for the Irish Cancer Society.

**Training for Visiting Committee Members**
Committee members attended two training days in the Irish Prison Service Training Centre in Portlaoise in April and October. Mr. Gregan also attended the visiting committee Chair’s meetings. Such meetings are an ideal occasion to share experiences with other committee members, while updating on current prison practices and their context (eg GDPR).

**Programmes for offenders**
A number of A.V.P (Alternative to Violence Project) courses ran throughout the year with continued success.

The successful partnership between Shelton Abbey and Bóthar continues to be a standard annual event in the centre’s calendar, with the arrival of donated calves and the departure of pregnant heifers to needy families, as well as the arrival of young goats for quarantine, before onward transfer to selected recipients. To date, the experience has not only benefitted disadvantaged families, but has also generated a deep sense of pride within the Shelton community. Bóthar has become a valued ambassador for the Irish Prison Service and promotes the good work being done in Shelton throughout the world.

The provision of temporary release programmes, well in advance of an offenders release, is proving to be an excellent reintegration tool. All offenders must supply an address where they are welcome during the periods of temporary release. The phased
release plan allows time for relationships and trust to build. The alternative – immediate release back into the community, is not as beneficial.

**Activities for Offenders**

The catering section continues to provide the highest quality of food production and rewarding employment and learning opportunities for offenders. The regular turnover of offenders ensures a continuous training schedule. The annual external catering audit notes high standards are continuing to be achieved. Unfortunately the Q Mark award has been discontinued for the last number of year due to lack of funding.

The farm is providing a wide variety of positive activities to suitable offenders. The continuous and regular audits ensure best practice is maintained. The mix of tillage farming and animal welfare enables offenders to experience a wide variety of skills, for example, poultry keeping, with the eggs produced being available for sale.

The garden and grounds team continues to maintain the outstanding features of the Shelton estate. Constant improvement and development of the areas provides a wide variety of skills and experience to interested offenders. A high proportion of offender employment revolves around the farm, grounds and garden.

The Industrial cleaning team continues to provide an excellent service, with cleaning and maintaining communal areas and communal toilet and shower blocks. The team also looks after the laundry.

Those who do not work on the campus, participate in work parties in the community or are in full or part-time education.

Six offenders completed a barista course in December and a number of others completed a course in culinary skills.

Some offenders, having obtained accredited training in other institutions find the new skills are not developed, because of restricted availability of relevant work opportunities and further training courses.
**Addiction Counsellor**

Ms. Camilla Walsh continues as the fulltime addiction counsellor. Camilla is a dedicated counsellor who is respected by the offenders and noted as a trusted listener and she continues an induction/awareness meeting with all new committals — advising of all services etc. available. Addiction related programmes continue to take place.

**Chaplaincy**

Lay Chaplain Catherine Black continued to provide spiritual guidance to the offenders, organising Mass and other religious events and was always available to assist the offenders and staff when required until her new appointment in Mountjoy Prison. The Committee would like to wish her well and thank her for her service.

New Chaplain Ms Debbie Borland was appointed on 1st December 2018 and the Committee would like to wish her well in her new role.

**Community Welfare Officer**

A community welfare officer visits Shelton Abbey one morning per week and provides a valuable service to the offenders. Offenders being released with a small allowance ensures their families are not put under pressure to provide for them.

**Probation Service**

The Probation Service continues to deliver a wonderful service to the offenders. The Community Return Scheme (CRS) has been one of the most positive/progressive initiatives witnessed by the committee. The Centre is one of the highest providers of candidates for CRS and this is due to the dedicated work of the Probation team. The probation officers are still expected to deliver other services to offenders and are in constant demand.
Accommodation

The Open Centre is separated into two accommodation units, the Main Building and Avoca House. The main Building accommodates 56 offenders in dormitory/communal rooms with two rooms now fitted out with Pods giving offenders a lot more privacy, with long term offenders benefitting from this type of accommodation in preparation for moving into their own accommodation on release. Most offenders on transfer are accommodated in the main building and over time progress to single room accommodation in Avoca House. The shared toilet and shower facilities (Main House) have now been refurbished to a very high standard. All prisoners are responsible for the cleanliness of their own space.

A Kitchen area was equipped during 2018 for use by the life sentence prisoners.

Avoca House also accommodates the offices of the Probation Service, Chaplain, Addiction Counsellor, Training and Education Officer and Integrated Sentence Management Officer.

Health Care

Medical Cover is provided by a local GP Practice. The Doctors parade continues Monday - Friday mornings and all medical requirements are facilitated through their office. Most offenders are considered suitable (under contract) to retain their own medication and self-medicate. There are two Nursing officers assigned to Shelton Abbey with one nursing officer on duty during day time hours 7 days per week. There are no healthcare staff available during the hours of 7.30pm – 7.30am. There is no dedicated Psychologist or Psychiatrist assigned to the Centre but external appointments are made as required.

Education

See Appendix A

Farm and Grounds

See Appendix B
Offenders Statistics
147 offenders transferred in

35 offenders transferred out
6 offenders absconded during the year with 0 still @ large at year end

Conclusion
There has been a remarkable improvement to this facility in the past year and we feel this should be developed further. This year saw the development of a soccer pitch, outdoor gymnasium, a cabin with bikes for spinning classes, a barbers, an aviary, (built by the offenders) and the provision of a workshop for offenders to pursue hobbies and interests - however this space awaits the installation of electricity.

We feel single room accommodation best prepares offenders for release and acknowledge the installation of pods in two of the dormitories. The Centre lacks other facilities that might be considered in future capital investment plans i.e. enhanced visitor's area, in particular a designated space for children.

The committee also requests the Irish Prison Service considers introducing further work and training facilities.
The committee once again wishes to convey their appreciation to Governor Kathy Hoctor and wish her well in her new role. The committee welcomes new Governor Joseph Donohue and looks forward to working with him. We wish to acknowledge the professional and dedicated service provided by all staff to offenders during their stay in this Centre. May we also take this opportunity to thank the offenders who we have found to be respectful and courteous during our visits.

A special word of thanks to Ms Noeleen Donnery for her help in typing this report.

Signatures:

Mr. Thomas Gregan (Chairperson)

Mr. Richard Codd

Mr. Thomas Healy

Mr. Anthony Lawlor

Ms Geraldine Graham

Dated: 14th May, 2019
Appendix A

SHELTON ABBEY EDUCATION CENTRE

Annual Report 2018

Introduction:

The Education Centre provides offenders with an opportunity to engage with education services while in custody in Shelton Abbey. Courses which lead to certification and locally accredited courses are offered. QQI certified courses are offered at Levels 3 & 5. This enables students to establish themselves on the National Framework of Qualifications with nationally recognised, vocationally orientated, valuable qualifications. Other courses offered provide students with an opportunity to develop new skills and to explore areas of study which are of interest to them.

All levels of educational backgrounds are catered for from Basic Ed. to Open University level. This presents challenges to accommodate a broad range of abilities and ensure that each student benefits from their time in the centre. To achieve this, teachers have had to become flexible and creative to cater for the individual needs of each student. Personal achievement is our core value, irrespective of what level it occurs at.

Education Services were provided by the equivalent of 7.4 whole time teachers. The Education centre operated in the usual academic calendar in addition to a Summer programme during the months of June and July. Classes were timetabled from 9.30 - 12.30, 2.15 - 4.15, and in addition, evening classes were conducted from 4.30 to 6.30/7.30, Monday to Thursday.

Each week an average of 60 students attend the centre for various classes. Some attend numerous classes and others may attend for a small number of classes, depending on the level of interest of each individual.

Options for accredited and non-accredited programmes were offered to all offenders. The primary emphasis is on those with basic educational needs, in order to cater for literacy, numeracy, social skills and occupational skills development.
Facilities

Currently the Education Centre operates in a prefab building which was originally installed as a temporary solution. This building is now in need of replacement with a permanent structure. Restrictions on space also mean class sizes are not adequate to accommodate the demand for certain classes.

### 2018 Programmes

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<th>Comments:</th>
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<td>Preparation for release Referrals for employment, training &amp; further education</td>
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<td>English classes for non-Irish students</td>
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<td>Driver Support</td>
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<td>ABE</td>
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<td>Basic education (Literacy 1-1, small groups)</td>
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<td>Education Course</td>
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<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Swimming, Hillwalking, Spinning, Gym, Nutrition, Pilates</td>
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### QQI RESULTS
#### June 2018

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### IT

Internet access for inmates has been available in Shelton Abbey since 2014, with user accounts set up on an ongoing basis during 2018. The purpose of this access is to assist both teachers and inmates by having suitable sites available to further enhance the quality of the education experience and also to research employment, education and training opportunities.

### Storybook Dads

The Storybook Dads programme is continuing to be offered to inmates in Shelton to support family literacy and storytelling for their children. The dads prepare to read and record a children’s story and the Librarian does the follow-up stage, including the link to Dartmoor Prison, U.K. A personal CD is returned to each dad and is then sent to the Librarian.
family. This facility has been expanding. To complement this, we offered children’s books sessions during the pre-Christmas season to facilitate inmates to book-browse and take time making choices for their children.

**Physical Education & Fitness Training;**

A spinning studio was opened in Shelton in 2018 which enabled classes to take place without the need to travel to the local sports centre. Weekly Pilates and Abs training sessions were held in the visiting hall. Personalised programmes and supervised gym sessions were held on Mon. And Fri. afternoons. Fitness classes and a weight management programme, including nutrition, were held weekly throughout the year.

**Guidance Counselling**

To prepare for post-release life many choose to link with the Guidance Counselling Service offered by the Education Centre. This service prepares a plan for each individual based on what is best suited to them. The service has at its core the interest of the individual and to guide them on whatever path they choose.

**Training**

In order to prepare inmates for a return to work after release a variety of training opportunities are available. The number of people availing of these courses continues to increase each year.

Safe Pass  42  
Manual Handling 48  
Telehandler Novice 7  
Warehouse Operations 4  

**Driving**

Car Lessons 4  
Truck Lessons 2  
Driver Theory 10  

**Summer Activities/Projects**

**Physical Education and Exercise;**
Weekly pilates classes were available. Spinning, Pilates and Abs classes continued as well as two gym sessions.

**English;**
English classes continued for two weeks in June and also two weeks in July.

**Wood Sculpture;**
Wood Sculpture classes continued for all of June and all of July.

**Stone Carving Workshop;**
Due to the success of the Arts Council Artists in Prison Scheme in 2015, 2016 and 2017 it was decided to run another project in 2018.

**Wellness Week**
In June a Wellness Week was organised in conjunction with KWETB. Funding was
available to run a week of activities to promote and encourage both physical and mental health. This proved to be a very successful week of events which was well attended and enjoyed by all. As part of the week our annual 10k run/walk was organised and was a great success.

**Awards Day:**
Our annual awards presentation took place in June, with certificates presented to all who attended during the year. Achievement awards were presented to 3 individual students to mark their progress during the year. We had a former student returning to speak at the ceremony and he proved to very inspirational to all in attendance. Special thanks to Director of Training with KWETB Eileen Cullen for attending and presenting certificates on the day.
Appendix B

Farming Report 2018

Tillage:
16 acres of winter barley was sown on the farm. It was sown on the 02/11/2017 and harvested on the 23/07/2018 yielding 54.06 Tonnes. Average moisture was 15.4 % and average bushel was 66.7. The yield was down slightly on the previous year as a direct result of the drought weather conditions. Straw crops however were good and some excellent quality straw was saved.

33 acres of spring barley was sown on the farm. This was sown on the 07/05/2018 and harvested on the 23/08/2018 yielding a total of 62.7 tonnes. This was a particularly tough harvest as a direct result of the adverse weather conditions which resulted in poor yields of both barley and straw. The crop was sown about 6 weeks later than usual because of a very bad spring which then developed into a drought where the inputs to the crop i.e. fertilizer was plain to be seen on the ground at harvest time considering it was applied on the 25/05/2018. The yields were in keeping with the national averages experienced by tillage farmers throughout the country.

All tillage work was carried out to the highest standard by agri. Contractor Des Lane who won the tender for this work with the exception of the rolling of the crops after it was sown which was done by an inmate using our own tractor and roller.

Potatoes:
1 acre of Rooster potatoes was sown and ½ an acre of mixed veg. was also sown (carrots, parsnips, turnips, onions and peas). All work associated with the potato and vegetable crops was completed by the inmates working on the farm such as ploughing, rotavating, sowing, fertilizing, spraying, harvesting and packaging. Like the barley the potato crop was also back on other years due to the drought, however we did harvest approx. 8 tonnes of potatoes which were sold locally.

Potatoes are sorted and bagged by inmates throughout the winter months and bags of Potatoes are sold from the farm for €6.50 for a 20kg bag. The Governor also donated some potatoes to two very deserving charities, one being the Saint Vincent de Paul and the other being a local Cancer support charity in Arklow.

Bedding Plants:
Bedding plants were brought into the poly tunnel on weeks 9, 11, 13, and 16. Inmates planted up all bedding plants and looked after the plants in poly tunnel by watering, fertilizing and hardening off the plants before sale. The bedding plants were sold to Mountjoy complex, Arbour Hill, Douchas centre, and Cloverhill Prisons as well as local sales where a huge amount of customers come in and purchase plants directly from the farm and we are experiencing more and more sales each year. Some local charities also received a donation of flowers on behalf of the Governor. Letters of appreciation are on file for same. Winter bedding plants were also brought into the poly tunnel in September and the Dublin Prisons were supplied with their winter bedding requirements. The poly tunnel continues to be one of our biggest employers of inmates on the farm for the summer months as there is a huge work load involved.

We also supply our own gardens here in Shelton with flowers, in particular the fan beds at the front of the glass house and the rose garden was a wonderful sight when all flowers were in full bloom. Which was evident to see on our open day.

Hens:
The hen flock was culled on the 24/09/2018 as the hens were here 18 months at that stage and the ratio of eggs to hens had fallen to well below 65% so they were no longer productive. The hens were culled on site and then disposed in Larry Earls (Fallen animal collection service) where a death certificate is issued for same which is in line with the Department of Agriculture guidelines. The broken eggs throughout the year are also disposed there also. The inmates then completely stripped out the hen house and egg stores and power washed all areas in preparation for the new flock. The hen house is also professionally fumigated when the henhouse is empty, this is to kill any outstanding germs or bugs in particular Red Mite.

The new flock was placed on the 27/11/2018. There was 250 Lohmann brown hens placed. We also had our annual unannounced inspection by the department of Agriculture where inspectors examine hens and all paper work involved.
Dung samples from the hens are sent to complete laboratory solutions every 15 weeks for salmonella testing and an annual water sample is taken.

Inmates are responsible for the day to day running of the hen house which includes egg collection and recording each day, feeding hens and replacing grit on scratch area each week.

We continue to be self-sufficient in eggs here in Shelton Abbey and any excess is sold in our eggspress machine from the back yard where staff and visitors can purchase 30 free range eggs for €5.00.

Bothar:
Shelton Abbey once again provided the quartine for the goats for Bothar in 2018. 136 goats from the Republic of Ireland arrived in Shelton Abbey between 12/09/2018 and the 14/09/2018. All care for the goats is done by the inmates working on the farm and under the supervision of vets from the department of agriculture who come and inspect the goats and supervise the goats being loaded when they are being exported. 100 goats were exported on the 25/10/2018 when they left Shelton Abbey and started their 6 day trip to Rwanda by land and sea and air.

Goats received vaccinations such as Heptavac P+ and ivomec Super and all this is done with the assistance of the inmates working on the farm. The goats always prove to be popular with the inmates as a lot of the goats would have been bottle fed and are pets and have lovely temperaments.

20 calves were received on to the farm in March of 2018. These are currently being cared for here by the inmates and will be put in calf to a Friesian Bull from June onwards and will be exported in October.

On the 10/10/2018, 17 in calf heifers were exported to Rwanda. The in-calf heifers travel by road to Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam and were then flown to Rwanda over two days as part of the plane’s cargo where they are put into crates.

In 2018 Bothar also ran a 5 module animal husbandry course specifically to do with the work the inmates do with the calf rearing. This was certified by VIVA and 12 Inmates were presented with their certificates on the Bothar open day.

Timber and Kindling project
In 2018 the Governor continued the timber and Kindling project which was run in conjunction with the Red Cross team here in Shelton Abbey. The Governor received donations of off cuts of roofing timber and a load of old pallets which was delivered to the farm. The Red Cross was in charge of bagging this kindling and it was distributed to very worthwhile projects such as St. Vincent de Paul and Arklow cancer support unit.

As a result of the ‘beast from the East’ there was extensive damage done to trees in the garden of Shelton Abbey and a lot of trees had to be made safe again by professional tree surgeons. All this timber was then cut in garden and transported to the farm to be split. The logs were then sold to staff for €20 for a specified quantity and all money received from this timber project will be donated to a local suicide prevention charity Wexford Marine Watch.

Car valeting
All Shelton Abbey vehicles continue to be valeted on the farm in the workshop using the specialist tools and machinery by the inmates on a weekly basis.

Pigs
We continue to have one pig on the farm and we hope to try and breed from her. We have maintained our Bord Bia status in relation to her.

Wood workshop:
The wood workshop had another busy year and have been busy with certain projects such as making new picnic benches for the front of the house. The inmates also made new shelving for Shelton...
Abbeys new cargo van which turned out to be a top class job. Other projects included bat and butterfly boxes made from old pallets, bird houses and some fairy doors all which has been installed through the gardens in Shelton Abbey. They also make products for sale which were offered during the Open Day during the summer with a lovely picnic bench being raffled at the end of the day.

Concrete Workshop:
The concrete workshop produced some wonderful pieces in 2018 such as slabbing, concrete platers and big lanterns. We also got approval for a lot of new moulds such as fair doors, garden planters etc. so we will be able to make a very wide variety of products in 2019 and provide further employment for inmates on the farm.

Tinahely Show Project:
During the end of July and the first week of August some of the inmates that both work on the farm and the garden go out and assist the Tinahely Show committee getting ready for the show which is held on August bank holiday Monday each year, and for the week after assisting in the clean-up operation. This work involves laying down temporary road ways, setting up marquees, cattle pens, sheep pens laying out car parks etc. This relationship with the Tinahely show committee is hugely positive for the inmates. The Tinahely Show committee then visited Shelton Abbey on the 24/09/2018 where they made a presentation to the inmates that worked there and thanked them personally for their help and explained the importance of this relationship in helping them put on the show each year.

The ‘Beast from the East’
On the 02/03/2018 the so called ‘Beast from the East’ landed in Shelton Abbey bringing with it 6 foot high snow drifts. This posed a very challenging situation keeping livestock cared for and snow moved using our tractor and snow plough and credit must be given to WTO Declan McCabe along with other members of staff who remained on site for a number of days ensuring that Shelton Abbey, inmates and Livestock were cared for during the very challenging spell of weather. It really did bring out the team spirit of both the staff and inmates here in Shelton Abbey and we are very happy to report that no livestock were lost during this period of extreme weather.