

COASTAL PATROLS PLAY QUAY ROLE IN WEXFORD

Wexford MarineWatch continues to maintain its record of ZERO deaths by suicide in Wexford Harbour since the voluntary group was established in 2012.

Providing suicide intervention and safety patrols on Wexford Bridge and Quays several nights a week, the group is delighted that its hard work and efforts have paid off and that it has been able to help so many people.

Founded by local man Frank Flanagan, the organisation was set up to deal directly with the alarming increase of suicide and people entering the water in the town.

"Prior to setting up, statistics showed us there was average of 16 persons a year entering the water in Wexford" he said.

"Some were accidental, while many were a cry for help. Sadly some of these cries for help went unnoticed and ended up in tragedy. This tragedy destroys friends, families, neighbours and the community each time it happens and people are left trying to pick up the pieces with so many questions unanswered.

We felt we had to take a hands-on, pro-active approach and deal with this head on" he said. The outcome was MarineWatch. One representative of each of the emergency services sits on the Board of MarineWatch and is also one of the keys to its success.



Founding members of Wexford MarineWatch Committee pictured on Wexford Quay front (l-r): Sgt Mick Hanton (Order of Malta), John Maher (Fire Service), Philip Creane (Civil Defence), Frank Flanagan (Founder/Chairman), Sgt Denis Whelan (An Garda Síochána), Mayor Cllr George Lawlor (Wexford County Council), Ger Carthy (Ambulance Service), Nick Bowie (Wexford RNLI), Conor Barry (Civil Defence). Missing from pic is Garda Neil Murphy (Community Support Officer).

alcohol and putting themselves in danger, this makes up the remainder of the 168 incidents."

When someone puts themselves in danger, the onus is on MarineWatch to get them to safety as quickly as possible and get them the help they need. "Regularly we rely on our RNLI colleagues and the Gardaí to provide back-up assistance when someone is intent on entering the water.

"There are numerous advantages in what we do, not only for the people we save, but also for the Rescue Services. Their work is voluntary too. So by preventing someone from entering the water, we are not just saving a life but we are avoiding days, weeks or possibly months of searching for a missing person."

With 100 volunteers now on board the organisation is constantly recruiting new members. The professionalism of Wexford MarineWatch has not gone unnoticed across the whole country, and it has been commended by many other lifesaving groups and emergency services, such as the RNLI, with whom they work closely alongside.

RNLI Ireland's Divisional Operations Manager Owen Medland said: "Wexford MarineWatch is a superb example of community lifesaving in action. Working closely with the RNLI and all local agencies, the partnerships built by the team in Wexford are clearly making a positive impact on reducing incidents.

"We wish Wexford MarineWatch a happy third birthday and look forward to continuing the close partnership between Wexford RNLI and MarineWatch volunteers".

Extra patrols are planned by MarineWatch over the festive season, as many people are out to celebrate the season and enjoy their Christmas parties and volunteers will be on duty to try and ensure no-one comes to any harm.

Interested in volunteering? Apply online at www.wexfordmarinewatch.com/volunteering



Volunteers with Wexford MarineWatch on night patrol along the harbour.

INTERVENTION & PREVENTION

Over the course of three years, the organisation has intervened in 168 incidents and prevented 56 people from entering the water. "These 56 people may not be here today if it had not been for the intervention of our volunteers" said Flanagan.

"We deal with a wide variety of incidents and no two patrols are ever the same. We regularly have Ringbuoys vandalised, people requiring First Aid, people suffering severe effects of