

FAO Richard Mackenzie.

Re: Proposed name change for Ballybot, Newry.

Dear Mr Mackenzie,

Having seen the article on BBC Newsline regarding the changing of the name from Ballybot to The Quays, I felt compelled to voice my objections.

I, like many was born and reared in that part of the town as my birth certificate verifies. Growing up in the 1970's was a struggle but my family always seemed to manage and a testament to them, we never realised we were poor. All five children in my family passed the 11+ exam and went on to receive a university education. Even though we are all now successful in our chosen fields, not one of us forgets where we came from.

I have been teaching in a grammar school in Enniskillen for fifteen years now and I would like to think that I am regarded as a role model for my students. My subject gives me the opportunity to recount stories of my childhood and remembering my working class roots is something which I feel spurs them on to achieve their best.

In this day of growing prosperity and affluence, it is easy to forget how families constantly battled to make ends meet. Newry was not always the bustling town it is today. Ballybot remains the residential heart of the town, something which not too many towns in Northern Ireland retain. All too often we see these type of houses being replaced with commercial properties, the emphasis on accretion of wealth rather than a living community.

The families in Ballybot have been there for generations. They take pride in who they are and where they come from. We undoubtedly have a genuine link with the quays and the docks, as many families including my own, had relatives who made a living in The Merchant Navy. However they all came back to live in Ballybot and it is their affinity with this area which makes the retention of the name so significant today.

As one person rightly said in the Newsline interview "The Quays is a shopping centre down the road.." This indeed is the association that most people will have with that name. The name Ballybot has been there for centuries and actually means something to us. It is for this reason that I ask you to take this into account before making the final decision. The name Ballybot offends no one. Why not be sensitive to the wishes of the people who live there? Don't eradicate a lifetime of memories and replace them with a name whose connotations may be more aesthetically pleasing, but with which most people, young and old, have no real empathy.

Yours Sincerely,
Jane McGeoghan.

