

Update on Kenmare Hospital

In ongoing discussions with Michael Fitzgerald, head of the HSE in Kerry, he has stated that he intends to have a HSE project team in place by March to oversee the Kenmare hospital development. He also intends to have the design brief completed by the end of March. This brief will list the accommodation, standard of build and requirements for the new hospital. Once completed the brief will be given to the Design and Build teams of which there are 5 preferred ones on the HSE list. At the build stage many local contractors will have an opportunity to obtain sub-contracting work on this multi million euro project.

The proposed linking of the Ring of Kerry/Ring of Beara and the bypassing of Kenmare will have a long term negative effect on the town

The decision at a Kerry County Council meeting on Monday the 8th of February to retain the Western relief road as an objective in the Kenmare town development plan will have a long reaching and negative effect on the town. Essentially, it will mean that traffic will be routed from the Ring of Kerry and Ring of Beara directly, thus bypassing the town centre. In a letter being circulated in the area last week it was claimed that the removal of the indicative line from the map was a "success". It is unfortunate for the business people of the town and for landowners that the proposal put forward by myself and the Chamber of Commerce, to remove the line and, more importantly, the objective written in the draft plan, was not supported. The fact that the objective remains in the draft town development plan means that, if a western relief road is built, the town will be bypassed. I have been speaking to the Minister for Transport's office on the effect of the National Roads Authority Constraints Map. They confirmed to me that such a map will also make obtaining planning permission in areas to the west of the town difficult, if not impossible.

The draft town development plan (under the heading 'Transport and Movement' at page 41) states that **"It is an objective of the Council : to develop a preferred route option for a link road from the N71 Bantry Road to the N70 (Killarney) Road West of the town "**. However, a Kerry County Council commissioned report on traffic in the town, written by Malachy Walsh & Partners in February 2006, made a number of key recommendations; **"an indicative Eastern relief road has been included in Kerry County Council Kenmare Local Area Plan which will join the N71 Killarney Road to the R569 Kilgarvan Road. The implementation of the Eastern relief road which will provide Kerry County Council with the opportunity to re-evaluate the introduction of longer term traffic management"**. In light of this analysis and the fact that the Eastern relief road is not yet complete, I feel it is premature to seek to put in a Western relief road. At no stage in the 2006 report was there a suggestion of a need for a Western relief road. The €300,000 allocated to the progression of the Eastern relief road is welcome but this new proposed western route is a retrograde step for jobs and business.

Kerry County Council have been given authority and money to repair roads immediately

I welcome the announcement that Kerry County Council can spend money on Kerry roads immediately. The full allocation of funds will be notified to Kerry County Council in the next

few weeks. The role of the Department of Transport in relation to local and regional roads is to provide grants to supplement road expenditure by Local Authorities. Local Authorities have been advised by the Department of Transport that they should now prioritise works on roads damaged in the recent adverse weather. Local Authorities have also been advised that they can spend up to 25% of last year's road allocations immediately under the Restoration Improvement grant, Discretionary Maintenance Grant, Discretionary Improvement Grant and Special Block Grant to address the damage caused by recent severe weather while they await their 2010 allocations.

Provision of car parking essential instead of proposed paid street parking

Based on figures supplied to me, over €400,000 was paid in parking levies to Kerry County Council by businesses in Kenmare. I have been pushing that Kerry County Council spend this money on much needed car parks in and around the town. However, it is an objective of Kerry County Council to introduce on-street paid parking in Kenmare town and other scheduled towns in the county. I am working with my fellow party councillors on this and have asked them not to support such a move as it would have a negative effect on trade in the town.

Change of criteria for housing at Taobh Linn, Railway Road

There has been a change in the criteria for the housing in Taobh Linn. Under the Capital Assisted Scheme, Cara can allocate 25% of the units to people who would not ordinarily qualify for social housing. It is no longer necessary to pay a lump sum to avail of the housing in Taobh Linn. One bedroom units are available for €125 per week and two bedroom units are available for €130 per week. In order to qualify, applicants must be over 55 and capable of independent living. There is a €400 fully refundable deposit required on all units.

Worker secured for Carnegie Arts Centre

I am pleased to announce that I have secured a FAS worker for the Carnegie Arts Centre, Kenmare. This new position will help the Carnegie in its ongoing work to promote the centre, its plays and performances.

Notre Dame College Students to visit to Kenmare

Forty students from the University of Notre Dame in the United States will be in Kenmare on the weekend of the 6th and 7th of March. I was delighted to be able to persuade them to come to the area. On Saturday they will be playing our local basketball team in the Pobail Scoil sports hall.

Charity Walk for Kerry Life Education

On Sunday the 21st of March at 2pm there will be a sponsored walk in aid of the Kerry Life Education Centre. Please contact myself or Sean Daly & Co for a sponsorship card.