

Kerry's Eye

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Enda Kenny invited to spend more time in Kilcummin

Former Taoiseach Enda Kenny was a worker and that is a nice thing to be able to say about anybody, Independent Deputy Michael Healy Rae told the Dáil.

Paying tribute to him, Deputy Healy Rae said his late father held him personally in very high regard. "They both got on very well and he always complimented the Taoiseach's record of work and his genuine commitment to politics," he said.

"When this is over, the Taoiseach will have more time to give in a very important place," he said. "That is a place called Kilcummin in Killarney, County Kerry. He will have more time to do the Ring of Kerry cycle. He will not have to be as quick; he can go a bit slower as he will not have as many places to go to and the end of it. The Taoiseach will actually be able to go into Murphy's or into the Fáilte on College Street and maybe even have a pint. The one thing he will be able to do is to watch Kerry winning another Munster final, take notes and go back to Mayo with them."

On a serious note, Deputy Healy Rae said that while he did wish him well, he also wanted to thank another group, the Irish people. "When we talk about the recovery, the people who suffered, who sacrificed their incomes and who really had a tough time over the last years, were the Irish people," he said. "I think of those people today - those who are in pain and suffering; the young people who have high mortgages repayments and who are struggling, and those people on waiting lists who are still not sorted out. There is a big job of work to be done. I do not say this in a critical way but in a positive way to the incoming Government and the new Ministers. There is a massive job of work to be done and we must all stick together and work together, in a positive way, to reduce waiting lists, to ensure that people have work, to ensure our health system is something we can be proud of and not be critical of and people will not be blinded while waiting to have cataracts removed, and to ensure that farmers will have their payments on time. In other words, we must do our job properly and correctly."

Ferris highlights damage by seals to fishing stocks

An a great deal of the damage that has been done to our fishing stocks by the growing population of seals, Sinn Fein Deputy Martin Ferris told the Dáil.

He said he had met one person who had been fishing recently with gillnet and got ten boxes of cod. "I have a picture showing how three of them were absolutely destroyed by seals, and I can give the Minister a copy afterwards," he said. "That is practically a third of his catch for that day gone. Fishermen have difficulties trying to make ends meet before facing up to that. Others are drift netting and have the same experience. I have also met people involved with angling. I did not realise that, in particular, along the coastal areas and mouths of rivers, salmon breeding areas are being attacked by seals. That is their argument and people want to see what can be done."

Deputy Ferris said he had been told a study has been carried out by the French Government and its findings have been accepted and supported by the European Union, EU, and it concerns the damage being done by seals to fish stocks. “There is a lobby within the group seeking some kind of cull system to deal with the matter,” he said. “It is not acceptable for somebody to haul the nets after 48 hours to find a third of the catch gone. There is a responsibility on us to act. It may not be politically palatable, and certain members of the public may find difficulty with this.”

In reply, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine Michael Creed said seals are a protected species under the EU Habitats Directive and seals are also protected under the Wildlife Acts. “I am advised two species of seals, grey seals and harbour seals, are common in Irish waters,” he said. “In so far as the management of the seal population is concerned, I clarify for the Deputy that this is the responsibility of the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, and it is administered by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.”

The Minister said seals are protected under the EU Habitats Directive and the Wildlife Acts but permits may be obtained under Section 42 of the Wildlife Acts to hunt seals where significant damage is being caused. “This redress is available, for example, to individual fishermen to control damage to fisheries by seals at particular locations,” he said. “Permits may be issued by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in response to specific applications, with each application considered on its merits. I am advised that anybody with concerns about interactions with seals in particular locations should contact their local National Parks and Wildlife Service ranger in the first instance.”