

*Dear Editor*

*The Dáil goes into summer recess this week. It is due to sit again on Tuesday, September 19. The next column will be sent to you on Friday, September 22. Thank you for your continued support.*

*Tim Ryan*

## **Limerick Leader**

Tim Ryan, Oireachtas Correspondent

### **O'Donnell calls for urgent action on the M20**

If there is no motorway connection from Cork to Limerick to Galway, and it is not possible to get from Cork to Limerick in an hour and Cork to Galway in two hours, we do not have balanced regional development, Senator Kieran O'Donnell told the Seanad.

“The existing motorway from Limerick to Cork, in particular from Limerick to Mallow, is impossible to travel on,” he said. “Anyone who knows it will know about the bottlenecks at Charleville and Buttevant, in particular down by the quarry. This matter is very much to the fore in people's minds, in particular in Limerick but also in Cork and everywhere along the western seaboard, including Galway, because we need to have connection. The Minister of State (Michael D’Arcy) might indicate how the mid-term capital review is progressing, the anticipated timeframe for the collation of information, and where the M20 stands in this process.”

At the start of this year, he said the Minister, Deputy Shane Ross, agreed to his proposal to allocate €1 million to Transport Infrastructure Ireland, TII, formerly the National Roads Authority, to allow for the recommencement of planning work in respect of the M20. “The allocation has allowed TII to recommence planning, engage consultants and do the pre-planning work required before the main design feature gets under way,” he said. “As we stand, no further time is being lost. The key element now is to ensure that when the mid-term capital review is complete, we can effectively get the planning and design phase under way for the M20 with immediate effect.”

Well over 200 people attended the public consultation meeting he had held in the South Court Hotel on Tuesday, 18 April, he added.

In response, Minister of State D’Arcy said the Programme for a Partnership Government committed to additional capital investment over the period of the capital plan to 2021, to be allocated on the basis of the outcome of a review of that plan. “This review is ongoing,” he said. “Submissions on the review and the additional funding available for allocation were sought from Departments in January 2017 and are currently under review by my Department.”

He said he personally would consider the M20 project as one of the priorities of the State. “Two of the State’s largest urban areas are not connected with a motorway of a sufficient

standard,” he added. “However, I cannot predict what the dynamics of the review will be when it is concluded in quarter three this year, but I anticipate that the project will be one of the priorities. The importance of the motorway must be accepted.”

### **O’Sullivan calls for urgent changes to fast-track housing**

While Airbnb is clearly a positive for short-term rentals in some cases, it is causing displacement in the rental market, Labour Deputy Jan O’Sullivan told the Dáil. Homes are being used on a full-time basis where they could be available to families, she said. That needs to be addressed.

Speaking during a debate on housing, she said she is particularly anxious to stress the opportunity that exists for the construction of mixed tenure estates, including significant numbers of social housing units, in the more than 700 publicly owned sites.

“Public funds are being spent on infrastructure for those sites,” she said. “I strongly urge that the private building sector not be allowed to profit from those publicly owned sites. There is a real opportunity to have a mixed tenure of social housing, affordable rental and affordable purchase on the sites. It appears that each local authority will have to devise its own plan for each site and bring it to the Department for approval. That could drag on for years. I strongly urge the establishment of a National Affordable Housing Scheme or a national approach to these sites. The control would be in the public sector and builders could tender to build the houses in those areas. There should be a requirement for a certain percentage for each of the different sectors of social, affordable, affordable rental and so forth.”

### **Increasing levels of anti-social behaviour in Limerick city**

The growing problem of anti-social behaviour in Limerick city was raised in the Upper House by Fine Gael Senator Kieran O’Donnell.

Criminality, he said, is a problem but, at present, we have anti-social behaviour that is being tested in terms of the age profile of the people doing it and of how the laws apply. “There were incidents in the Old Cratloe Road and Caherdavin area of Limerick in which young people going about their business were attacked by youths,” he said. “Another student was attacked outside Limerick Institute of Technology. Perhaps we could have a structured debate on how the anti-social behaviour orders, ASBOs, are working and whether they are fit for purpose.”

Senator O’Donnell said there is a small element engaging in unruly, anti-social behaviour of a severe nature. It is not a case of normal youths engaged in mischief. “Perhaps we could invite the Minister for Justice and Equality, Charles Flanagan, to the House to discuss whether the current system for dealing with anti-social behaviour is fit for purpose,” he said.