

Tullamore Tribune

By Tim Ryan, Oireachtas Correspondent

Improvement works needed on the N62

The need for improvement works to be carried out on the N62 which is a critical artery through Offaly and the Midlands was raised in the Dáil by Fine Gael Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy.

“It links the M6 at Athlone and continues to the M7 at Roscrea and the M8 at Horse and Jockey,” she said. “It is crucial that the road, which is a national secondary road, be maintained to the highest possible standard because we require it to ensure we can develop our social, economical and cultural offerings in the area. We need access to our power station, forestry and for industrial purposes. We need access to develop the rural economy. We have a very good business park in Ferbane, which has a food campus, and we need good access there.”

Unfortunately, she said some parts of the road are deteriorating, particularly in Ferbane as one heads out of the town towards the Gallen Priory nursing home. A significant piece of the road really and truly is in a dreadful state and needs to be upgraded.

“We then move onto the roundabout at Cloghan, which is in a particularly poor state,” she said. “I understand a design has been drafted for public consultation. Good consultation will find an agreement on the design because a solution needs to be found. It is an unusual junction with five roads leading into it. Another measure is required at Boolinarig Cross, which is a very unsafe junction. The speed of traffic along that route means it is frightening to try to exit from those two routes onto the junction.”

In response, Transport Minister Shane Ross said Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) has invested approximately €8.3 million in upgrade works on the N62 in County Offaly since 2012. “Additional funding of €369,000 has been provided by TII for road safety improvement schemes on the route,” she said. “I accept the Deputy's argument that this is not enough. I acknowledge that further great improvements are needed on this road. After ten years of retrenchment, there are many potential national, regional and local road improvement projects across the country. The scope for progressing new road improvement projects will depend on the capital funding allocated to the Department under the proposed ten-year capital investment.”

Rural crime spiralling out of control - Nolan

Rural crime is spiralling out of control, Sinn Féin Deputy Carol Nolan told the Dáil. “Hundreds of people have attended meetings throughout the constituency of Offaly,” she said. “We have had meetings in Cloghan and Banagher and there was a meeting in Coolderry attended by over 200 people in solidarity with Richie McKelvey, the farmer who was savagely attacked.”

“We need more gardaí on the ground,” she said. “We do not need to hear about the reopening of Templemore. We want to see the results of that. We want to see more gardaí patrolling and protecting rural communities. One example is Edenderry, a big town in north Offaly with a growing population. The Garda station is open on a part-time basis, which is a disgrace because we are seeing increasing crime in that town”

In reply, Justice Minister Charlie Flanagan said Deputy Corcoran Kennedy and he are in constant contact with An Garda Síochána and are very pleased by the recent task force announced by the chief superintendent which will see a back-up of armed units assisting in tracking down these criminals.

“My target is to ensure the overall Garda workforce of 21,000 by 2021 is firmly on track,” he said. “A further 800 new garda recruits will enter the Garda College next year. An extra 500 civilians will be recruited. I will be in Templemore before Christmas and I will witness the passing out of a further 200 Garda Síochána on top of the recently attested 188 from Templemore in November. I will get things done.”