

Kerry's Eye

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Funding sought for greenway between Tralee and Fenit

The need for significant funding towards developing a national greenway network including a disused railway line from Tralee to Fenit was raised in the Dáil by Fianna Fáil Deputy John Brassil.

“There has been a walkway proposed for it for a number of years but there has been no progress whatsoever this year or last year,” he said. “The south Kerry greenway from Glenbeigh down to Renard was announced amid great fanfare in 2014. Again there has been very little progress. When will we see delivery of this commitment in County Kerry and across Ireland?”

In response, the Taoiseach Leo Varadkar said there has been significant investment in greenways in recent years, not least the Great Western Greenway in Mayo and the Déise Greenway between Dungarvan and Waterford city. “I have yet to be on the latter but I am told it is fabulous and worth a visit,” he said. “There is also the greenway on the Royal Canal which goes across several counties. I do not know to hand the progress with the ones in Kerry referred to by the Deputy. I will ask the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to reply to him directly.”

Closure of grada stations a mistake

The closure of so many Garda stations in 2013 was a serious mistake, Deputy Danny Healy-Rae told the Dáil. These stations dated back to the foundation of the State and they gave confidence to the elderly and all who lived in rural parishes, he said.

“A common request I receive is a request for public lighting,” he said. “People are afraid in dimly lit streets, crossroads and various places. It is a continuous request to have public lighting so that one could see if there was anyone passing or going by in the dark of night.”

Speaking during a debate on rural crime, he said he wished to highlight both sides of Kenmare Bay, 33 or 35 miles long on the southern side and nearly 50 miles long on the northern side. “There is no garda stationed in Sneem and if there is a robbery or an accident, it takes 40 minutes if a Garda car has to come from Kenmare and an hour if it has to come from Killarney,” he said.

If a person needs help in places like Ballinskelligs, Portmagee, Waterville or Kilgarvan, there is no Garda station, he said. They are all closed. “It costs more, we are told, to keep them closed than it did to keep them open. Both sides of Kenmare bay are very exposed to all sorts of theft, to the importation of drugs and all of the kind of villainy that takes place when places are not being properly policed. Six homes were broken into in mid Summer in the Glenflesk area, in Headfort and in Muckross and several more in Kenmare. A serious robbery took place in recent days in Killarney. A commercial property was unable to open for a day and a

half because so much damage was done to the premises, with cabling and other materials taken out.”

Money sought for Kerry roads

Kerry Independent Deputy Danny Healy Rae told the Dáil he wanted Government ministers to go beyond the Red Cow Roundabout and travel to Kerry to see where slaughter has been occurring at junctions due to their inadequacy.

“Buses and lorries have been held up and lives are being placed in danger because of inadequate junctions and roads that cannot cope with the serious increase in the volume of traffic,” he said. “Money is needed for the junction at the top of the Listry Road and for the junction at the top of the Lewis Road. Money is also needed for works to be carried out on Listry Bridge to make it a bridge as it is not a bridge, as such, at present. I ask for funding for the 1.2 km realignment at Gortahanboy on the N72. I also ask for funding for Ballinakilla Bridge to the west of Glenbeigh on the Ring of Kerry road, and I make no apologies for doing so.”

Deputy Healy-Rae said he wanted to make sure that the Minister of the State, Deputy Brendan Griffin, “is made aware of my request”.

“I am putting pressure on him now because he was putting pressure on us when the ball was in our court,” he said. “It is his turn now. Let him prove what he can do in terms of what he can bring down to Kerry. He will be measured on that.”

Replying on behalf of the Taoiseach, Education Minister Richard Bruton said the major cities outside of Dublin will be growing at twice the rate of Dublin. “There is a very clear commitment that the infrastructural spines in which we will invest in the coming ten years will be to support much more rapid growth outside of Dublin than we have seen in the previous years,” he said. “For the first time ever, we are underpinning a national planning framework with a ten-year capital programme. We are tying our infrastructural investments to the spatial-regional, strategy. That is the crucial decision that has been made by this Government.”

Ferris concerned at decline in bird population

Concern at the concerned over the serious decline in the country’s bird population was expressed in the Dáil by Sinn Féin Deputy Martin Ferris.

Speaking during a debate on the Heritage Bill, he said one figure suggests that our bird population has declined by a quarter over a number of years. “Much of that is down to irresponsible work carried out by some farmers, in particular the uncontrolled burning on hills and mountains,” he said. “Many of my age group will remember in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s welcoming spring with the arrival of the cuckoo. I have not heard a cuckoo for years and many other people living in rural areas would have a similar experience.”

Deputy Ferris said an aspect of it goes back to what was called progressive farming - removing ditches and hedges to make huge fields for convenience to accommodate the type of machinery that is used nowadays. "The cost we have paid has been the decline in a number of species of birds and the effect it has on wildlife," he said. "It has not all been progressive; it has had that effect. Travelling along motorways, one will see areas with one field that previously had four fields, and the associated protection for the wildlife is gone."

"It would be good if all the lobby groups came together to argue out their case," he said. "We all want to protect our wildlife, to ensure that our roads are safe and that needs to be done in a responsible way."

Consultation is needed and people must be listened to, he said. "Many arguments are made every day in the House on the decline of rural Ireland, usually with reference to the declining population and the lack of jobs. Our environment is equally important."