

Limerick Leader

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Plight of Limerick sexual abuse victims highlighted

The plight of a group of Limerick men, the survivors of sexual abuse at Creagh Lane National School, who travelled to Brussels recently, was raised in the Upper House by Sinn Féin Senator Paul Gavan.

He said the teacher involved has already been convicted in the criminal courts. “The case happened 50 years ago but the victims' difficulty is that they are still awaiting redress,” he said. “Unfortunately, the Government seems to have set its heart against offering any redress to these victims.”

Senator Gavan said he met them along with several other Deputies and Senators outside the gates of Leinster House. “These men are heartbroken and feel the State has completely abandoned them,” he said. “I am delighted Deputy Quinlivan travelled to Brussels with them today and that our MEP, Liadh Ní Riada, is giving them strong support. I am pleased Limerick City Council, on an all-party basis, has asked the Government to address this issue. I am also delighted Senator Kieran O'Donnell is in the Chamber. I call on him to do more on this issue.”

These men have waited long enough and deserve redress, said Senator Gavan. “Since the maximum redress they can get under the current scheme is €84,000, there is no financial reason not to give these people redress. It is shameful that they have had to wait this long. It is appalling that the Government continues to set its face against fairness and justice for these people.”

Collins seeks a fodder aid fund

The need for a crisis fodder aid fund to be put in place for farm families in Limerick who have been impacted by the bad weather was raised in the Dáil by Fianna Fáil Deputy Niall Collins.

“County Limerick has a large number of farming families,” he said. “The Golden Vale has not been impacted, but many small farmers in the west of the county have marginal land, much of which is in areas of natural constraint, and some face other challenges such as the hen harrier designation, which is an issue yet to be resolved.”

Deputy Collins said the farmers and farm families have told him they will experience a fodder crisis in the spring. “The period from July to October has been the wettest since 2009, which has impacted on the second cut of silage,” he said. “The price of hay, silage and straw has almost doubled in recent weeks and months. A crisis is looming.”

In response, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Michael Creed, said he had been very conscious throughout these last few months of the difficult weather conditions and their effect on the agriculture sector.

“It is important to emphasise that my Department operates an emergency helpline for animal welfare cases,” he said. “I urge any farmers facing an emergency animal welfare situation and who may be in need of support to contact the helpline for advice and, if needs be, emergency assistance.”

Last month he said the European Commission agreed to his request for an advance payment of the 2017 basic payment scheme. “I took this action in response to the poor weather conditions we are discussing here this evening and also in response to market difficulties caused by currency fluctuations, among other issues,” he said. “This advance translates into an increase from 50% to 70% in the rate for the basic payment scheme to those farmers whose applications were confirmed fully clear. Issuing of these payments commenced as early as possible, or in this case after 15 October, and balancing payments will be made with effect from early December. There will also be an increase permitted to the advance for Pillar II rural development schemes.”

“However, be assured that my Department and I, in conjunction with Teagasc, will continue to monitor the fodder position closely throughout the coming winter months,” he added.

Motorised transport grant to resume in 2018

It is almost five years since the motorised transport grant was closed to new entrants, Deputy Willie O’Dea told the Taoiseach. “On occasions too numerous to recollect, the Taoiseach's predecessor, Deputy Enda Kenny, informed me the matter was being dealt with,” he said. “He said it was very complex, although I do not know why that would be so. However, he said it was being dealt with. Five years after the grant was closed to new entrants, can the Taoiseach tell me when it will be dealt with?”

In reply, the Taoiseach Leo Varadkar said the new scheme will be legislated for in 2018.