

Limerick Leader

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Almost 800 people in Mid-West waiting for cataract surgery

A total of 783 people in the Mid-West are waiting approximately 15 months for cataract surgery from the time they had their assessment, Senator Kieran O'Donnell told the Upper House.

"That is not acceptable," he said. "Many elderly people have come to me to raise the issue. Following surgery people go overnight from a situation of being almost blind to being able to see. One elderly gentleman who came to see me recently told me he was on the waiting list to have surgery on both eyes. He was so distraught that his family came together to ensure he could have an operation on one eye at a cost of €2,000. The operation was carried out in Ireland which meant it did not qualify for the treatment abroad scheme and he was not on the waiting list for sufficiently long to qualify for the National Treatment Purchase Fund."

Ways to allow such people to have the operations they need must be found, he said. A proposal is before the HSE at the moment from the University of Limerick hospital group to develop a cataract surgery hub at Nenagh General Hospital. It would seek to operate five days per week. "A full complement of staff would be in the order of 16, including two ophthalmologist consultants, two registrars, two clinical nurses, two general nurses, one advanced nurse, two ophthalmologists and clerical staff," he said. "The revenue budget would be approximately €1.75 million per annum in order to have the facility fully up and running. There is a capital cost of €500,000 to buy equipment. If the facility is fully up and running, it will deal with approximately 45 cases per week. The waiting list would be gone in nearly a year."

In response, Minister of State Finian McGrath said he would bring the Senator's concerns about Nenagh and the €375,000 back to the Minister and the HSE, and he would bring that message to the acute hospitals division too. "I agree that the figure of 783 people waiting in the Mid-West is not acceptable and that we have to act promptly," said. "The HSE and National Treatment Purchase Fund, NTPF, have worked together to continue to drive down long wait times for inpatient and day case procedures. Waiting list numbers published by the NTPF at the end of October show that the number of public patients on the active waiting list for cataract surgery has been reduced by over 16% over the past six months. Between April and the latest available figures, the number on the overall list fell from 13,552 to 11,863. The cataract waiting list fell from 10,304 to 8,667."

Traffic calming measures sought for Kilcornan

Concerns over proposed traffic-calming measures that are proposed for Kilcornan were raised in the Dáil by Deputy Tom Neville.

This road has been a danger point for many years and that fact has been brought to the attention of successive Ministers, he said. "I proposed that speed-limit measures be extended

in 2004, which seems like a lifetime ago. However, my suggestion has been constantly refused, first by the National Roads Authority, the NRA, and then by Transport Infrastructure Ireland, TII.”

Kilcornan, he said, stretches from the church to the community centre for about a mile and a half on the N69. The fact that it is located along this expanse of the road is the biggest challenge. “The focal point of the proposal relates to the community hub, which comprises the school, the GAA pitch and the Ger McDonnell Park AstroTurf pitch,” he said. “All of these are accessed by people from neighbouring villages and towns - such as Kildimo, Pallaskenry and Adare - with which Kilcornan has joined up to form an under-age soccer team. There is, as a result, a glut of traffic coming onto the road, particularly between 9 a.m. and 2pm or 3pm.”

In reply, Transport Minister Shane Ross said his understanding from TII is that following contact between Limerick City and County Council and the regional road safety engineer about traffic calming measures at Kilcornan, the council initiated preparation of a report on proposed measures for consideration by TII. “I know the Deputy has raised this issue in parliamentary questions on a regular basis over the past year and I understand that TII has provided him with updates in response,” he said. “In October, I understand TII indicated that the design of the proposed traffic calming measures at Kilcornan were expected to be finalised shortly. I have now been advised by TII that it is anticipated that funding will be provided in 2018 for traffic calming measures between the two junctions in Kilcornan, which will also involve a reduction in the speed limit.”