

The Kerryman

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Plight of people with disabilities in Kerry highlighted

Caring for people with disabilities in Kerry was raised in the Dáil by Deputies Danny Healy-Rae, Michael Healy-Rae and John Brassil.

Deputy Danny Healy-Rae said it is an ambition of the partnership Government to empower people with disabilities to live independent lives, in other words to taking them out of congregated settings and placing them in decongregated settings. “However, no assessment is being done of how this is working,” he said. “In one instance, a person was given 28 anti-psychotic doses in the month of May when that person should only have gotten four. This person is blind as a result. I want this case investigated.”

Deputy Michael Healy-Rae said the decongregation of settings and taking apart of centres of excellence since 2011 had resulted in cases like the one that my brother highlighted. “It has had a detrimental effect on those who benefitted from being in congregated settings,” he said. “We have constantly highlighted this matter with the Minister of State, Deputy Finian McGrath.”

Deputy Brassil said four severely disabled adults attend Ashfield Lodge in Listowel daily. “An application has gone in to provide funding to house these four individuals on a permanent basis,” he said. “I understand the Minister of State, Deputy Finian McGrath, is to visit this particular house in Listowel shortly with a view to progressing this. When will the Minister of State be able to visit with a view to progressing this particular issue?”

In response, Health Minister Simon Harris said the Minister of State will visit Kerry shortly and will have an opportunity to visit those facilities and engage on the issues. “I take seriously the point that Deputy Danny Healy-Rae raised about the well-being of an individual in a facility. If he wishes to pass on the details to me, I will look into them.”

Chronic state of Kerry roads highlighted

The chronic state of rural roads in Co Kerry was highlighted in the Dáil by Fianna Fáil Deputy John Brassil.

There are exactly 5,000 km of secondary, tertiary and regional roads in my constituency of Kerry, he said. While this represents approximately 6% of the overall national network, its funding falls far short of most constituencies. “In the Listowel electoral area alone, which I used to represent as a councillor, there are 4,000 km of rural road,” he said. “In 2018, €1.29 million was received but it will be necessary to quadruple that over a five-year period to get the roads back to where they were in 2008. I joined the council in 1999 and from 1999 to 2008, due to substantial investment by the Fianna Fáil-led Governments of the time, we brought the road network up to an acceptable state. That is the type of commitment that is needed.”

If the Minister, Shane Ross, does not give it, what is left of the road network will disintegrate and fall apart in the coming years, he said. “I ask the Minister to look at a €20 million rolling programme for the North Kerry area alone over five years. I ask him to pay specific attention to one road, the R551, which is known as the Dale Road, which links Tralee to Ballybunion. During the summer, that road brings busloads of tourists, particularly US tourists, to the golf course in Ballybunion but driving on it is a danger to their health.

“I ask the Minister to announce something practical that will bring real change, namely, an investment in the rural roads of Kerry. Instead of giving us €1.8 million, he should give us €4 million per year over the next five years.”

Pilot TB eradication scheme sought for South Kerry

Kerry Independent Deputy Danny Healy-Rae asked the Taoiseach if the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine would grant a pilot scheme to the people of Iveragh in South Kerry to eliminate tuberculosis by way of vaccinating and removing badgers?

“A total of 40 herds have gone down but it affects only 7% of the herd,” he said. “The remainder of the animals in south Kerry are fine. We do not want to create a situation whereby people would not buy the other animals. Only 7% of the herd is affected. The farmers are asking for a pilot scheme to remove badgers. They firmly believe the badgers are spreading TB. They need to be culled and got out of there.”

In reply, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar said he would certainly pass on the suggestion to the Minister for Agriculture.

Removal of pain-reducing drug queried

The removal of the pain-reducing Versatis patch from all drugs payment and medical card schemes was raised in the Dáil by Independent Deputy Michael Healy-Rae. These people, he said, are suffering from chronic pain, chronic nerve pain, including people with fibromyalgia and other types of pain they will have to live with for the remainder of their lives.

“On 12 December the Taoiseach told me this was a decision made by the HSE,” he said. “There has been a campaign in recent weeks in which people have highlighted the pain and suffering they are going through. What will the Government do for these genuine individuals who are in serious pain?”

In response, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar said the medicines management programme, a HSE programme which ensures medicines are used for the correct indications, has a system which it is only supposed to be prescribed for the treatment of shingles, but if it is being prescribed to treat non-shingles cases, people can apply for approval.

“Prescription charges for medical card patients under the age of 70 years were reduced in January and those who do not have medical cards who obtain medicines under the drugs payment scheme had the cost reduced in January by €10 a month,” he said.