

The Kerryman

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Closure of Tralee Women's Resource Centre criticised

The recent closure of the Tralee Women's Resource Centre after 32 years was raised in the Dáil by Sinn Féin Deputy Martin Ferris. For the past 32 years he said the centre has provided a tremendous service to women in Tralee and indeed women from outside of Tralee, including many areas out towards north and east Kerry.

"I pay tribute to the staff who worked there and voluntarily gave of their time to the women of Tralee," he said. "The centre made a tremendous contribution to women most in need down through the years. A review was conducted by the board of the Tralee Women's Resource Centre, TWRC, which has sadly concluded that the organisation is no longer as relevant as it once was when it was founded three decades and two years ago. I often wonder, how does one define 'relevant'?"

He said he could not understand how the HSE or any other section of Government can justify this action. It is terribly wrong. Women had come to the protest to voice their support for the centre and their anger at its closing down. "Perhaps some of them had been through the centre and got tremendous service there," he added.

In reply, Minister of State Finian McGrath said the Tralee Women's Resource Centre was a drop-in centre funded by the HSE, Tusla and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. It had a dedicated support worker for violence against women.

"Increased availability of a range of services provided by other organisations and increased demands and challenges have resulted in the decision to wind down the services of the women's resource centre," he said. "The move from the town centre to a new premises may also have been a factor in the fall in the number of clients using the centre. I understand that the centre is endeavouring to make alternative arrangements for its users."

The HSE is linking with the organisation to explore alternative arrangements for users of the centre. he added. "It can be traumatic and emotional when a centre closes, especially one in existence for over 30 years."

Call for wind energy guidelines to be put in place

The urgent need for new wind energy guidelines to be put in place was raised in the Dáil by Fianna Fáil Deputy John Brassil.

Following repeated questions and lobbying, approximately 18 months ago, he said the then Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, Deputy Coveney, announced the new guidelines had been developed, were going out to public consultation and would then be implemented.

"Nearly 18 months later, however, they still have not gone to public consultation," he said. "In areas such as Gneevgullia, Ballydesmond and Ballyhorgan in Lixnaw, developments are being granted by An Bord Pleanála although they have been refused by Kerry County Council. If these guidelines were in place and implemented as promised, An Bord Pleanála would not be in a position to grant these wholly inappropriate developments right down on

top of people's houses. With advances in technology, one can put in turbines 150 m high, suitable to be located in low-lying flatland areas on top of people's houses. There is a place for wind farms on high land but not down on top of people's houses."

In reply, the Minister for Housing, Planning & Local Government, Eoghan Murphy said his Department is about to go to public consultation on the new draft wind guidelines. "I have also spoken to the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Deputy Bruton, about the possibility of solar energy guidelines," he said.

Griffin unhappy with uncertain over boxing at the 2020 Olympics

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has not yet made a final decision on the inclusion of boxing at the 2020 Olympic Games, Minister of State Brendan Griffin told the Dáil.

"Boxing is our most successful Olympic sport," he said. "We have won about 31 medals in the history of the modern Olympics, 16 of which have come in boxing and seven of those were in the last three Olympic Games. There is no doubt that we have a number of really good prospects for Tokyo so it is critically important that we would have this matter resolved. My primary concern in this is for the athletes and to give them certainty. It is very difficult 20 months out from the Olympic Games for an athlete to not know for certain whether their discipline will be included. I want to do whatever I can do to help ensure that certainty is there for those athletes."

Replying to Fianna Fáil Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe, he said to have this level of uncertainty, this relatively close to the Olympics, is just not good enough. "It is something that all of the international boxing associations will have to come together on and to work with the IOC to get resolved because at the centre of this are Irish athletes and athletes from other countries who have worked really hard to get to where they are and are now wondering whether they will actually be in Tokyo or not," he added. "I look at Kellie Harrington's recent success in particular. Kellie and many others have really great prospects for Tokyo 2020 and we want to ensure they have the best possible preparation in advance of that."