

## Clare Person of the Year

Honour for Kilkee's Willie Keane **p8**

## SPRING WEDDINGS

Everything you need to plan your big day **Section 2, pages 7-16**

## Moneypoint's biomass future?

Peter O'Connell

A LEADING energy analyst has claimed if Moneypoint power station converts from using coal to biomass, up to 200 jobs could be created and 30 years added to the life-time of the facility.

At present, Moneypoint employs 190 ESB workers directly, while a number of contract companies have 250 employees on site. In the region of 100 staff at the station have retired or moved on in the last three years.

Malcolm Brown, who has 30 years experience in the energy and low-carbon economy sectors, including as head of business development at Climate Change Capital, is confident the change would also consolidate work for contractors and create a sustainable biomass industry locally, with opportunities for landowners to grow and supply timber to create biomass (wood pellets).

Mr Brown, who is based in the UK, is to address a public meeting titled *The Future of Moneypoint* in Kilrush Community Centre this Friday at 7.30pm. The meeting will be attended by ESB Moneypoint station manager Brendan Kennedy and chaired by Labour Deputy Michael McNamara.

"Biomass is now established mainstream technology," Mr Brown told *The Clare Champion*.

"In Drax in Yorkshire, which is Western Europe's largest coal-fired power station and is over four times bigger than Moneypoint, they have successfully converted to sustainable biomass in half of their boilers. They have already done a conversion which is double the size of Moneypoint's capacity and this has also been done in Germany and Denmark. This technology became mainstream from around 2010 onwards."

The energy expert, who stressed that he has no financial or personal interest in converting Moneypoint to biomass, said the conversion process would not take long.

"The first thing you need to do is tweak the boiler design," he said, stating that currently coal is ground down in the mills so that when it is placed in one of the three boilers, it has become flammable dust.

"You would have to change the mills because when you're going to be grinding down sustainable biomass, which is wood pellets or from forestry or willow, you would obviously have to change the boiler to accommodate the biomass. There are three boilers in Moneypoint and you could convert them over a summer period, which is the off-peak electricity usage period."

Mr Brown said a long-term strategy for supply of biomass would also have to be on

the agenda.

"You would have to secure the supply chain for the biomass, which would be imported from North America. But you would have to sign long-term supply contracts and also build a storage area. One of the beauties of Moneypoint is not only is it a deep sea port but there is plenty of storage area on site where you could build a storage facility," he explained.

*The Clare Champion* has learned that the one shipment of coal per month, which constitutes 160,000 tonnes of coal, would have to be upped to approximately eight monthly shipments of biomass to meet the demand.

Mr Brown said Moneypoint as a coal-burning station is not sustainable. "It will shut because it's difficult to believe that anywhere in Europe is going to have a coal fire station after 2025. This is all about giving a second life to Moneypoint as a green power station. It's cheaper than wind and it creates an opportunity to create an Irish biomass industry."

"Ireland has got the best growing climate for biomass and one of the lowest levels of forest cover. It's also transformational in that it's cheaper to fight climate change this way. It saves €3.5 billion on the transmission upgrade. You wouldn't need another turbine or another pylon and from a Clare perspective, you create potentially 200 jobs in the local economy. It strikes me as an economic common sense. Windmills are not good for tourism and are certainly not good for the bloodstock industry," he maintained.

Approximately six wind turbines are under construction at the West Clare power station currently.

Mr Brown is to fly in from the UK following an invitation from Deputy McNamara to attend Friday's public meeting. Mr Brown has put together a report on converting Moneypoint to biomass, which he presented to Agriculture Minister Convoy last week.

Meanwhile, Deputy McNamara predicts that if Moneypoint is converted, jobs could be created and sustained.

"The jobs and spin-offs at Moneypoint are vital and that is why I have resisted any proposals on the sale of State assets. However, we must go further and ensure that the plant continues its key role in regional prosperity into the future. Malcolm Brown's proposals would give the power station an extra 30 years of service, create 200 additional jobs in wood pellet production and servicing, guarantee security of supply and protect the hard-won tourism reputation of the Wild Atlantic Way and West Clare," he said.



Lee Wall of St Calim's, Shannon, keeping the fans in full rhythm during their historic win over Abbey CBS, Tipperary, in the Munster Colleges U-19 rugby competition for the O'Brien Cup at UL on Tuesday. For full report, see Section 2, page 20. Photograph by John Kelly

## Syrian refugees on the way to South Clare

Owen Ryan

BEFORE the summer, Clare will see the arrival of Syrian refugees who will be housed in Sixmilecross, Shannon and Newmarket-on-Fergus.

At a meeting of Shannon Municipal District on Tuesday, director of services Ger Dollard told the local representatives that 15 to 20 families are to be settled in Clare, with nine of them set to arrive in April or May. These first nine are to be settled in Sixmilecross, Newmarket-on-Fergus and Shannon.

He also said an inter-agency group has been established to facilitate their settlement in the county.

Mr Dollard told the members that ac-

commodation costs would be borne by the council's normal funding. However, he said he had no doubt that the allocation received by the council would offset the extra demands being made.

Speaking afterwards, he said the family sizes would range from three to seven.

"We have set up the inter-agency group and it will require all of their involvement. We have been asked, and I can understand it, that these people not be isolated. In other words, you wouldn't be putting nine families together but equally you wouldn't put one family down in one corner of Sixmilecross and another way over in rural Newmarket-on-Fergus. They will have access to transport, to services and it's much easier for them to settle in if there are a few in a community," Mr Dollard

added. While South Clare is seeing the first arrivals, he feels other areas will also house refugees in the coming years. "I would say all parts of Clare will see some level of refugee relocation, as this programme goes on."

Many other counties will also be taking a share of refugees, he said.

"I think Limerick are involved in the first round as well. Thurles had a group of refugees, which have settled in the last while; Kerry are dealing with a group. I think every county in Ireland will have an involvement in dealing with this issue."

While integration of refugees has become a hot topic around Europe, particularly after the events on New Year's Eve in Cologne, Mr Dollard feels the

new arrivals will be well received in Clare.

"In fairness, I think people recognise that the circumstances they are coming from are pretty poor and there is a human desire to make their life a little bit better."

Independent Councillor PJ Ryan said the refugees should be welcomed but he noted it is also important that people already on the council's housing list are not displaced and that there is adequate vetting of those arriving.

Fianna Fáil Councillor Pat McMahon also said the refugees should be welcomed and that they are escaping a terrible situation.

"What these people are escaping from is indescribable. It's absolute horror," he said.

**HEART SAVERS**

**HEALTH STATS LIFE SCREENING**

**FIGHTING HEART DISEASE AND STROKE - A MAINLY PREVENTABLE DISEASE**

*(Heart Disease is Ireland's Biggest Killer claiming 27 Irish lives daily, 10,000 lives yearly)*

Join the **WAR ON HEART DISEASE** and don't be another Statistic - Statts are becoming an increasing concern worldwide.

**HEART AND ARTERIAL SCREENING CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE**

This Screening is a non-invasive method which gives an overall view of the Stiffness and Plaque build up in the arteries, including your inner blood pressure at the heart itself (Central Aortic Pressure)

As we get older our arteries get stiffer with a build-up of plaque and cholesterol, which can prevent our blood from flowing freely. If you have a family history of any heart/stroke related issues, you are a smoker, overweight, suffer from stress or have any other medical issues you are in a higher risk category. However, the test is Highly recommended for anyone over the age of 18

**PRIVATE SESSIONS HELD IN: WEST COUNTY HOTEL, ENNIS - Monday, February 1st**

**COST €50 per person For Appointment TEXT 086 8114223 email: heartsavers@gmail.com or Phone 086 8178718**

www.heartsavers.eu

Due to extremely busy phone lines text or email are a better option than phone - early booking advisable spaces are very limited

## Bylaws to tackle pier pressure

Nicola Corless

DOOLIN passenger ferry operators who fail to abide by new bylaws could have their permits suspended or revoked if new rules, which are about to go before Clare County Council, are ratified.

One public representative labelled the existing situation on the pier as "an absolute disgrace" when the Draft Doolin Harbour Bylaws were discussed at a special meeting of the West Clare Municipal District on Tuesday.

Tensions have been high on the pier for a number of years, as rival companies compete for valuable tourism business. Prior to the opening of the new pier last year, passenger ferries were reliant on the tide for docking, adding to difficulties.

Now, Councillor Bill Slattery has requested a report from the harbour master regarding the number of assaults and

[incidents of] verbal abuse at the pier in the last number of years."

While there are existing bylaws in place, the Doolin Harbour Bylaws 2005, the meeting heard that these had not been enforced because of the lack of proper facilities at the pier.

In 2014, the situation at the pier resulted in Clare County Council going to the High Court, which ordered operators to adhere to a code of conduct developed by the local authority or be found in contempt of court.

John Corry, meetings administrator for the West Clare Municipal District Committee, explained the ferries are "no longer influenced by tidal effects, so there is a strong argument to introduce the bylaws."

Mr Corry added that previously "they were never stringently enforced but now that we have a proper, modern facility, we are in a strong position to ensure there is order."

The meeting also heard the council

will likely have to hire a second harbour controller as services on the pier operate seven days a week.

Councillor Slattery said the situation that existed in previous years at the pier was "a very bad example for tourists. Tourists are coming here from other countries and being pulled by the hand, pulled by the shoulder and being promoted at cheaper prices. Last year was the worst year so far for this kind of thing".

"People are afraid to go to either of the operators in case it offends the other. People are afraid of repercussions," the Limerick councillor claimed at the meeting.

He said he wanted it to be clear in the wording of the bylaws that "ferry operators would have their license revoked if they were in breach of the new bylaws".

"The council owns this pier. These people don't own the pier," Councillor Slattery added.

Continued on page 6

## €16m boost for elderly care facilities

Dan Danaher

ELDERLY care facilities will benefit from a Government investment of almost €16 million over the coming years, with St Joseph's Community Hospital being identified as a new €12m flagship project in the Mid-West.

The latest funding announcement, which comes four weeks before the Elected General Election on February 26, has prompted renewed calls for a cost benefit analysis to be undertaken in relation to facilities in the county, including the possible move of St Joseph's to the derelict Our Lady's Hospital site on the outskirts of Ennis.

The €12m spend on St

Joseph's represents the biggest single investment announced in the Mid-West Region as part of an overall €42.88m allocation to eight nursing home and hospital facilities that will be rolled out over the next five years.

However, elderly patients and their relatives will have to wait at least five years before the major upgrading of St Joseph's on its existing site is fully completed.

Nursing homes in the county are also set to benefit from significant Government funding, with close to a further €4m being spent on facilities in Kilrush, Ennistymon and Rahen.

Rahen Community Nursing Unit on Scariff is set for a €2.55m investment over the next three years.

He said the €12m funding

for St Joseph's will build a new 50-bed unit on the existing site to accommodate existing beds by way of replacement and will refurbish the remaining beds to bring them to a high standard.

Deputy Joe Carey said the upgrading of St Joseph's would ensure compliance with HIOA standards, delivering a modern care facility for older people.

"The publication of the Capital Investment Plan will ensure that best practice is at the centre of elderly care for the years ahead," he said.

Continued on page 7

**C2**

**BOYS COMMUNION SUITS**

**3 PIECE SUIT, SHIRT, TIE OR BOW TIE**

**€159 all inclusive**

**CONFIRMATION STOCK ARRIVING DAILY**

38 Lower Market Street, Ennis. Tel: 065 6840440

CC January 29, 2016

