

Council’s planning decision on cottage demolition overruled

BY CRÓNA ESLER

AN Bord Pleanála has overruled a decision by Mayo County Council to refuse permission for an unusual development in Claremorris.

Maureen Duff appealed the council’s decision to refuse permission for the retention of a demolished dwelling house at Cloondinnaire, Claremorris.

The site – located off a straight, unimproved section of road with narrow grass margins on either side – had previously contained an old cottage, which Ms Duff had demolished.

Planning permission however was previously granted for an extension to the cottage, prompting Ms Duff to include the somewhat unusual planning application for “the retention of the demolished dwelling”.

In so doing, she was seeking permission to build a replacement dwelling on the site with a detached garage, together with the previously permitted extensions to the side, rear and first floor.

On August 10, 2011, the council refused permission due to the site size, development standards, public health concerns and surface water disposal.

After studying the appeal, An Bord Pleanála has now decided to grant permission for the development, subject to a number of conditions.

The board ruled the development would not be prejudicial to public health and would not otherwise seriously injure the amenities of the area and of property in the vicinity.

As a result, the board considered the proposed development would be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

In granting permission, the board stated that the development must be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the planning application and that no surface water can be discharged from the site onto the adjoining public road – instead it must be disposed to soakways on site. Roadside drainage must not be impaired, they noted.

The board ordered that the proposed effluent treatment and disposal system be located, constructed and maintained in accordance with details submitted to the planning authority on April 21, 2011, and in accordance with wastewater treatment guidelines for single houses.

In addition, the board instructed, within three months of the first occupation of the dwelling, the developer must submit a report from a suitably qualified person with professional indemnity insurance certifying that the proprietary effluent treatment system has been installed and commissioned in accordance with the approved details and is working in a satisfactory manner in accordance with the standards set out in the EPA document.

■ No contest: Shania’s portrait takes Texaco award



Proud winner: Shania McDonagh, a pupil at Mount St Michael Secondary School, Claremorris, is a winner in this year’s 58th Texaco Children’s Art Competition, having come first in Category B. Shania – holding her prize-winning painting entitled ‘Jack’ – was at a the Dublin City Hugh Lane Gallery for the announcement of the winners, with her father Alan, mother Yvonne, brothers Evan and Adam and sister Alanah.

BY CRÓNA ESLER

CLAREMORRIS teenager Shania McDonagh is no stranger to the art world. In recent years, she has been cleaning up at art competitions both on the local and national stage. Her latest achievement has seen the 14-year-old scoop the top prize in the 58th Texaco Children’s Art competition.

Shania, who is a student at Mount St Michael Secondary School in Claremorris and a member of Balla No Name Club, was awarded first prize in Category B of the contest for her work entitled ‘Jack’.

Shania’s efforts landed her a cash prize of €450. But Shania wasn’t the only Mayo student to catch the eye of the judges. A Special Merit Award in the competition was also presented to 13-year-old Anna

Clark from Jesus and Mary Secondary School, Crossmolina, while three members of n Castlebar Art Club were also presented with Special Merit Awards – nine-year-old Kasper Wawro, nine-year-old Alison Ryan and eight-year-old Aoife Quinn.

The prizes will be presented at a ceremony in Dublin in May at which all 161 top prize winners will be in attendance.

New superintendent needed in south Mayo

BY CRÓNA ESLER

BROKEN glass in car parks, groups of people drinking in sports grounds and the resultant noise and anti-social behaviour has become all too common in towns across Mayo and beyond.

In Claremorris and Ballinrobe, elected representatives have – for some time – been pushing for the introduction of by-laws to regulate and control the consumption and possession of intoxicating liquor in public places.

Now, as the long-awaited by-laws look set to be introduced, the councillors are calling for the immediate installation of a Garda Superintendent in the area, to replace Supt Padraic O’Toole who retired earlier this year.

The introduction of by-laws was unanimously approved by councillors at their local electoral area meeting in Claremorris earlier this month. The laws will now go before a full meeting of Mayo County Council. But, while the local elect-

Gardaí must be given extra resources to enforce public drinking by-laws

ed representatives are 100 per cent supportive of the by-laws, they have expressed concern about the garda resources in the area and the lack of a Superintendent for the district at present.

Fine Gael Cllr Patsy O’Brien said the by-laws are long overdue but “are not worth the paper they’re written on if they’re not enforced”. The councillors were fulsome in their praise for the work of the local gardai but remain concerned that the resources may not be available to enforce the by-laws.

Cllr O’Brien has called for a meeting with Chief Supt Tom Curley to impress on him the importance of a superintendent to take charge of the Claremorris and Ballinrobe areas. Agreeing, Fianna Fáil Cllr Damien Ryan said there is an onus on An Garda Síochána to

fill the position left vacant by Supt O’Toole’s retirement.

“The introduction of by-laws is a welcome and important step by Mayo County Council but like all laws and regulations, how it is implemented is the most important thing.

“The by-laws will be big help to the gardai and no doubt will be welcomed by people in society. There are plenty of places for people to drink – from the pub to hotels to the home. There is no reason anyone should be drinking on the street,” said Cllr Ryan. “This is an important piece of legislation and hopefully will take care of the problems being experienced but it’s only as good as the resources allow,” he added.

Cllr Ryan also urged commonsense to be used by gardai. “People

coming out of bars to watch the parade on St Patrick’s Day, with a drink in their hands, are technically breaking the law but I would hope commonsense would prevail,” he remarked.

Cllr Tom Connolly said he was delighted to see the progress and hopes the gardai will be given the resources to implement the by-laws. “There’s a huge amount of drinking going on in Claremorris at the GAA pitch, tennis courts, car park behind The Foodstore, playground, car park behind the Square, and other areas. Too often, there is broken glass left lying around in these areas and it must be stopped,” he stressed.

Cllr Richard Finn described the introduction of the by-laws as a “historic move for both towns”. He noted that the by-laws would strengthen the hands of the gardai and give them the power to act in relation to particular issues. But, he said, it is “a difficult situation for the gardai who are undermanned at present”.

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St Attracta’s students to mark ‘Grow It’ week

TUBBERCERRY: The local Grow it Yourself (GIY) group is taking an active part in National GIY week from April 14 to 21.

Members of the group will join with transition year students from St Attracta’s Secondary School to host an information stand in the Wild Bird Garden (beside Morahan’s) in Tubbercurry centre on Thursday next, April 19, from 10am onwards. People can try their hand at seed sowing, see samples of seedlings, vegetables and herbs growing at this time of year, and get lots of resources and tips on how to grow their own food. A free raffle for gardening supplies from local garden retailers will also take place.

According to Breege Walsh, local champion of the Tubbercurry group, everyone is welcome, especially children.

“We want to encourage and enthuse the current and

next generation to grow their own fruit and vegetables.”

GIY’s vision is for a healthier, more connected and more sustainable world where people grow their own food. The organisation brings people together in community groups and online to inspire and empower them to grow vegetables. There are over 100 GIY community groups and approximately 12,000 people involved in the movement around Ireland.

GIY group activities include monthly meetings, talks and demos; garden visits, seed and seedling swaps; produce bartering, mentor panels and grower’s meetheals. Meetings are free of charge, and open to all – beginners and experts, young and old.

The Tubbercurry group meetings take place on the second Tuesday of every month in Teach Laighne at 7pm.

Time extended on crèche and medical centre plan

BALLINDINE: Mayo County Council has agreed to a time extension on a proposed development for the south Mayo village, writes *Cróna Esler*.

Liam Coen, Michael Connelly and Denis Naughton had previously been granted planning permission for the demolition of an existing dwelling house at Lugalishen North, Claremorris Road, Ballindine.

Permission had also been granted for the construction, in its place, of a mixed development consisting of a two-storey medical centre, two-storey crèche with after-school facility, two two-bedroom semi-detached houses and three three-bedroom terraced houses, together with all other roads, parking and ancillary services.

In February, having failed to commence construction work on the development, the applicants sought a time extension from the local authority. Earlier this month, Mayo County Council agreed unconditionally to the request.

St Vincent de Paul homes for elderly proposal extended

BALLINROBE: A time extension has been granted to the St Vincent de Paul to begin work on a development in the town.

The charity had previously been granted permission to construct a residential development for the elderly at Knockfereen, Ballinrobe. The development will include six one-storey houses and eight apartments in two blocks.

As development work has yet to begin on site, the St Vincent de Paul has sought a time extension on the planning permission. Mayo Co Council granted the request without attaching any conditions.

Special Olympics collection

MAYO: Special Olympics Ireland will hold an annual collection day, sponsored by eircom, on Friday, April 27. Volunteers are needed to look after collection points in Castlebar, Ballina, Swinford, Kiltimagh, Ballinrobe, Westport, Belmullet, Ballyhaunis and Claremorris. Even a few hours of your time will make a big difference. To find out more or to register please visit www.specialolympics.ie/collectionday or phone Lydia on 085-8031445.

Propagation without seeds

MAYO: The next meeting of the Mayo Organic Group will be held on Thursday next, April 19, in the Bishop O’Healy Centre, Mayo Abbey, at 8pm.

The topic discussed will be propagating without seed.

The group has a full programme of events and presentations for 2012 and the cost of attendance is just €3 with membership fees of €15 per family.



Four star Talbot Hotel, Belmullet, is the talk of Erris



THE Talbot Hotel in Belmullet is Ireland’s newest boutique hotel and the first four-star hotel in Erris.

Family-owned and run by Tom and Orla Talbot it evolved around a business that has been a labour of love and determination for the past eight years.

Tommy, a native of Aghleam, brought up in the family grocery shop and undertakers, worked in the Western Strand Hotel in Belmullet until moving to Dublin for 10 years, where he worked in some well known Dublin pubs, and gained valuable experience in running busy bars to a very high standard.

Orla, a Home Economics teacher from Inverin in Galway, started her first job teaching in the Coláiste in Rosport. It was

while in Belmullet the couple met and subsequently moved to Dublin for 10 years. They returned to the West of Ireland in 2003 when the opportunity arose and bought The Anchor Bar in Belmullet.

After realising the local need for a nice seafood style bar they refurbished and thanks to great loyal and local support it was a great success, winning many awards including Georgina Campbell and Seafood Circle. Belmullet and Erris as a whole is a great place to live and over the past few years has become very popular with tourists, golfers, adventure sports enthusiasts, walkers, cyclists, sea anglers and many more.

With customers often asking for accommodation they decided to get

architects working with them on a design brief which included producing a townhouse hotel filled with lots of natural light. Both worked closely with the architect to get a practical but beautiful building, but the real hard work included designing the interior and sourcing it which was primarily Orla’s work but with a little help from Tommy. It is this interior which has delighted customers.

Tommy and Orla know about hard work and want to thank their many staff for keeping the business open and running throughout the difficult two-year project, which was no easy task working with a building site on three sides and above. As Tommy Talbot puts it: “The hours have been long and hard over the years, we have had many ups and downs. But our reward is

happy customers, that and locals telling us they are proud to have such a stylish hotel in the town ... now that the best reward.”

Many of the staff have been there since the beginning and know what it is like working as a team. This has been acknowledged by many guests on TripAdvisor who love the friendliness of the Belmullet people. The Talbot has 22 full-time and 25 part-time staff but this will increase in the summer months.

The hotel is now open nine months and is getting busier and busier each day. It has just been awarded four-star rating from Fáilte Ireland. Each of the 21 guestrooms are individually designed in colour and furniture style, each standard Deluxe room has a super-king sized bed, large flat screen

TVs, air conditioning, mini bar, iPod dock, Nespresso machine, luxury bathroom with spa toiletries, robes and slippers.

Tommy and Orla have tried to keep as much of the original bar as possible so not to lose its warmth and inviting charm, but they did add a new snug bar for the best pint around! This is a little hotspot for all sports events and ideal on these quiet nights where all the country’s problems are solved and forgotten by morning!

The Barony Restaurant can seat 50 to 60 guests which is to the front of the hotel, overlooking the street, and is very cosy and private. This is fast becoming Belmullet’s most popular dining room and is open from Wednesday to Saturday from 6.30pm to 9.30pm and reservations are strongly

advisable as it is very busy, especially Friday and Saturday. To make a reservation call The Barony Restaurant at 097-20484.

The function suite can seat up to 160 in a lovely setting with its own private roof terrace/outdoor area and has proved very popular for celebrations. Enquire at reception where staff can show you all the hotel has to offer and discuss packages to suit your special occasion. Meeting facilities can accommodate up to 16 delegates while the hotel’s conference suite can accommodate up to 200, with a large screen with projector and sound system.

Check out this beautiful hotel on www.thetalbothotel.ie or e-mail info@thetalbothotel.ie or join the hotel on Facebook to view all of its special offers.