



## St. Brigid's can again become economic driver for Ballinasloe

Campus has capacity to provide 8,000 sq m of serviced offices

Local TD Denis Naughten has called on the IDA to redouble its efforts to promote Ballinasloe to foreign investors in light of the fact that there is now 8,000 sq m of potential serviced offices on the St. Brigid's campus.

The old admissions building and nurses home would be ideally suited to develop as office accommodation for an international investor who requires office space with high speed broadband access.

The site of the hospital has the State-owned Metropolitan Area Network broadband cable running at the front of the building and the Irish Rail and Bord Gais networks to the north of the site. All three of these networks are now being managed by ENET which would allow a new enterprise to tap in without large up front charges.

With the availability of natural gas and the upgrade of the water supplies in both Co. Roscommon and Galway, and with massive spare capacity in the new sewerage treatment plant in Creagh (enough for an additional 1200 population), the town of Ballinasloe is in an ideal position to capitalise on some of the infrastructure problems on the East Coast.

Recently PayPal, which employs 2,400 people in Dublin and Dundalk, asked staff make spare rooms available because of the dire shortage of homes and apartments to rent. This would not be a problem in Ballinasloe and the surrounding towns and villages.



Denis Naughten wants to see the gates to St. Brigid's re-opened to provide new jobs.

There have also been reports of IT and software businesses based in Dublin that have stalled their expansion plans because of the lack of office space. With the availability of the St. Brigid's campus, this now provides Ballinasloe with a competitive advantage.

"With the infrastructure in place and with a population of approximately 80,000 people within a 30 minute drive of Ballinasloe, I believe the IDA has the material to make a major play for new investment in the town," concluded Denis Naughten.

## Aughrim & Athlone should be linked up in Siege cycleway



Denis Naughten promotes shopping local in Ballinasloe recently

Speaking in the Dáil recently, Denis Naughten TD called for the development of a new cycleway between Athlone Castle and Aughrim Village to coincide with the 325th anniversary of the Battle of Aughrim next summer.

There is already funding to bring the Dublin-Galway cycleway to Athlone Castle on the Connacht side of the town and there is a large level of agreement with farmers and landowners to bring the cycleway to Ballinasloe.

"I believe we need to sit down with the communities and farmers west of Ballinasloe to see if we can map out a route to Aughrim or to bring it along the old N6 with it segregated from the traffic," explains Denis Naughten.

Addressing the broader issue of the cycleway to Galway which could give a €12m economic boost to East Galway, Denis Naughten told the Transport Minister that it is possible to secure a route between Ballinasloe and Galway by maximising the use of existing State owned lands, rather than forcing a route through farmland.

If the support is available from Government, then we could see the new 'Siege Cycleway' well on track by the time the 325th anniversary of the battle of Aughrim takes place on 22nd July next.

## Portiuncula staff operating new telemedicine technology – Naughten



Denis Naughten TD has welcomed the operation of new telemedicine machines at Portiuncula Hospital, Ballinasloe. The machines have the potential when fully operational to provide 24 hour services to the hospital including an emergency stroke service that will save local lives, according to Denis Naughten.

Last year Portiuncula Hospital took delivery of a new telemedicine stroke machine, which not only provides stroke services but can also be used by consultants based anywhere in the world to assess local patients.

Initially the machines will be used to link the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at the hospital with some of the major hospitals in the country which will allow for critically ill patients to remain in the ICU at Portiuncula while under the care of some of the top specialists in their field.

"This is a major step forward because instead of patients having to wait to get a specialist ICU bed in some of the bigger centres, they can remain in their local hospital with access to the best medical advice and the care of the local expert ICU staff," explained Denis Naughten.

"The machine in question, Teledoc (TRASNA) stroke machine, will over time transform the way we provide medicine in Portiuncula Hospital and it has the ability to ensure that the hospital has one of the best emergency stroke services in the world."

This new machine is one of seven which, until exposed by Denis Naughten, remained in storage for a number of years in a warehouse in Cork waiting to

be rolled out by the HSE to hospitals throughout the country.

"The importance of this machine to the hospital cannot be underestimated, particularly since the loss of our stroke consultant at Portiuncula Hospital in March 2013, and I'm glad that my persistence on the issue has secured on of these machines for Ballinasloe" said Denis Naughten.

"For every minute that stroke treatment is delayed, a victim loses two million brain cells. This results in local patients losing significant brain function while they travel in the ambulances between hospitals and then spending longer in hospital. They are also more likely to require long-term nursing home care."

## New paediatric nursing posts at Portiuncula A&E welcomed

The recruitment of paediatric nurses to fill new posts in the A&E department at Portiuncula Hospital, Ballinasloe, has been warmly welcomed by local TD Denis Naughten. The HSE recently confirmed to him that one paediatric nurse has now taken up a position in A&E at the hospital with a further three paediatric nurses set to take up posts. This is in addition to the recruitment of an additional general staff nurse for A&E.

"The recruitment of these additional posts for what is a very busy emergency department is extremely welcome," stated Denis Naughten. "Once these posts are all in place I understand it is the intention of the hospital to have a paediatric nurse on duty in A&E at all times to assess children attending and to liaise with their families.

"This move will be welcome news for families whose children need to attend A&E and the new posts will hopefully address what can often be long waiting periods during busy periods. I understand this recruitment has taken place in conjunction with other measures to review current practices with the aim of reducing waiting times for children in A&E.

"I have also highlighted with the Saolta Hospital Group Management the need for additional consultants in the hospital and A&E to deal with the growing demands being placed on Portiuncula and I understand that a recruitment process is currently underway to fill these vacancies, which will further reduced the time which all patients spend in the hospital"

## Up to €5m tax refunds not being claimed by local workers - The taxman could owe you up to €800

Roscommon taxpayers are making substantial overpayments to the Revenue Commissioners by failing to claim tax relief on medical expenses and caring for the elderly and children, according to Denis Naughten.

"In a single year it is estimated that in excess of €5 million is overpaid by local taxpayers, which over a four year period means that the average worker could be due up to €800 back from the taxman," explained Deputy Naughten.

"In the case of medical expenses and private rents over 60% of refunds are still not being claimed. In these areas alone over €250 million more would be repayable if everyone made their legitimate claims. Other big overpayments occur when people move job or retire. Many people also fail to claim home carer's relief while older people are often due DIRT tax refunds that are never made.

"Instead of making it easier to claim refunds the Government seems intent on making it more difficult. For example, on medical expenses, relief is not refunded for: routine dental and optical treatment or for the first €125 of a claim (€250 for a family).

"These restrictions just add to the difficulty of making a claim. If they were removed it would be possible to move to a simple system where claimants could sign a simple tax relief claim, at the time of payment, which could be returned to the Revenue."

To find out more information on the overpayment of tax you can log on to [PuttingPeopleFirst.ie](http://PuttingPeopleFirst.ie) or by contacting the Revenue Commissioners directly on 1890 777 425 or [www.revenue.ie](http://www.revenue.ie)

## East Galway key to development of Ireland's Camino – Naughten

Denis Naughten has said that he wants to prioritise the completion of the Beara Breifne Way walking/cycle route from

This walking and cycling trail, based on the historic march of O' Sullivan Beara in 1603, links 60 villages and towns along the spine of the country. The route through County Galway combines the Hymany way and the Suck Valley Way.

"The villages and towns in County Galway and Roscommon through which the walk/cycle route runs are rich in tradition but have seen limited numbers of tourists and the development of this trail will be a major benefit in attracting tourism to these areas," stated Denis Naughten.

"When finished the trail will link with the Ulster Way in Blacklion giving a walking trail from the southern tip of County Cork to the Glens of Antrim. As a result this trail has the potential to be Ireland's Camino due to its length and heritage.

"We have already seen the Wild Atlantic Way become a great success for the west coast. The Beara Breifne Way could do the same for the centre of the country if developed fully, but it requires support from Government.

"This major tourism asset on our doorstep is already 80% developed, including the Hymany way and the Suck Valley Way and it is my intention if I have a role in the next Government to see it completed and properly marketed."

## Another review of Portiuncula A&E concerning

Denis Naughten has said that he wants to prioritise the completion of the Beara Breifne Way walking/cycle route from County Cork to Cavan, via East Galway, which has the potential to become Ireland's Camino route. The Saolta Hospital Group has commenced a review of A&E services in all five of its hospitals, including Portiuncula, and there are growing fears that this could threaten the current 24/7 operation of the A&E in Ballinasloe.

This review follows on from a review of maternity services by the Saolta Group a couple of years ago which recommended the closure of a single unit, namely the one in Portiuncula.

Back in 2014 the Department of Health made a submission to the Budget which included a proposal to remove the 24/7 A&E from Portiuncula Hospital. At that time Minister Leo Varadkar gave a guarantee that this would not happen under his watch.

This review will cause a lot of concern locally and if it were to be implemented not only will patients have further to travel to avail of emergency care but it will push our over stretched ambulance service beyond breaking point.

We already see the impact that the closure of Roscommon A&E had on other emergency departments such as Galway, Mayo, Mullingar & Sligo. This proposal, if implemented, will cost lives

and lead to absolute mayhem in the other A&Es which have to cope with the additional patients.

Those that are reviewing the local A&E services need to answer the question - what price are they putting on a life?

Instead of downgrading Portiuncula A&E the Saolta Group should be replacing emergency services that the hospital has already lost - such as our 24/7 emergency cardiac service and our emergency stroke service.



## New initiative to save lives and reduce crime as 'Keep Safe' card launched



Denis Naughten has said that he wants to prioritise the completion of the Bera Breifne Way walking/cycle route from County Cork to Cavan, via East Galway, which has the potential to become Ireland's Camino route. A new initiative to save lives and reduce crime, particularly against older people, was launched by Denis Naughten TD to mark

International Day of Older Persons.

The launch of the 'Keep Safe' card combines an emergency response card to assist the emergency services with an unknown caller card to reduce incidents around bogus tradesmen preying on vulnerable people.

The card provides the emergency services with vital information, including the new Eircode which has been incorporated into the ambulance dispatch system, which will assist paramedics getting to a critically ill person far quicker.

"In life-threatening situations, minutes do matter," stated Denis Naughten. "This card has been designed as a community response to delayed ambulance response times and with the incorporation of the new Eircode this will mean that ambulances can get to an emergency far quicker.

With the Emergency Response Card householders are asked to fill in their location using their Eircode together with directions to their house, their own telephone number and their doctor's details. Once filled in the card can then be placed in a prominent location in the house for ease of access, e.g. by the phone.

The Unknown Caller Card is based on that developed by Gardai following an increase in the number of bogus callers and tradesmen calling to vulnerable people. The object of the initiative is to empower an older person when dealing with unwanted or unknown callers and to reduce the need to engage in conversation. While the primary advice is not to open the door to strangers inevitably there are times when, because of the trusting nature of older homeowners, they will open the door and engage with these callers.



## Independent review of mental health service must include Galway – Naughten

Local TD Denis Naughten has called for the independent review of the mental health services in Roscommon to be extended to cover the service in County Galway stating that "the problems associated with the mental health service in Roscommon were compounded by the way the service was 'reconfigured' in County Galway and this should also form part of the review".

This review is long overdue and will I hope lead to the implementation of a plan that will help not undermine the recovery of people who require mental health services.

"I have been calling for such a review for a long time and while I welcome the fact that this will do a root and branch overhaul of the service in County Roscommon, I cannot understand why County Galway is excluded from such a review," explains Denis Naughten.

"I have no doubt that the current problems in both the mental health services in Roscommon and Galway have been compounded by the closure of the acute psychiatric unit at St. Luke's in Ballinasloe, adding to the pressures already on the units in Galway and Roscommon."

## Weekly clinic in Ballinasloe

Tuesday Mornings clinics by appointment.

Tel: 090 6627557.

Since the new constituency was established we have held a weekly clinic in Gullane's Hotel, Ballinasloe.



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