

DARRAGH O'BRIEN T.D. BALBRIGGAN WARD UPDATE

GARRISTOWN-BALLYBOUGHAL-LUSK-RUSH-
SKERRIES-BALBRIGGAN-BALSCADDEN

FIANNA FAÍL
THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

SPRING 2009



DARRAGH O'BRIEN T.D. WITH STUDENTS FROM SKERRIES COMMUNITY COLLEGE AT THE YOUNG SCIENTIST EXHIBITION

MAJOR INVESTMENT FOR SCHOOLS IN THE BALBRIGGAN WARD

The upgrading of existing schools and the provision of new facilities is crucially important.

I am delighted that in 2009, 5 schools in North Dublin have been approved for construction, with a further 6 going to architectural planning. The Government will spend €656 million in 2009 on school building projects.

I am particularly delighted that Loreto Secondary School in Balbriggan has been given the go-ahead for the much needed extension and refurbishment. I visited the school late last year and was happy to be of assistance in securing this funding.

THE BALBRIGGAN WARD SCHOOLS THAT WILL GO TENDER AND CONSTRUCTION IN 2009 ARE AS FOLLOWS

SCHOOL	PROJECT TYPE
Loreto Secondary School, Balbriggan, Co Dublin.	Extension/refurbishment project for 1,000 pupils
Balbriggan Educate Together, Hamlet Lane, Moylaraq, Balbriggan, Co Dublin	New 16-classroom school
Ardgillan Community College, Castlelands, Balbriggan, Co Dublin	New first-phase post-primary school for 350 pupils initially and temporary accommodation for a proposed new start-up primary school

THE BALBRIGGAN WARD SCHOOLS WITH PROJECTS NOW STARTING ARCHITECTURAL PLANNING IN 2009 ARE AS FOLLOWS

SCHOOL	PROJECT TYPE
Scoil Caitríona NS, Kenure, Rush, Co Dublin	Extension/refurbishment
Rush NS, Rush, Co Dublin	Extension/refurbishment
Scoil Náisiúnta Lusca, Lusk, Co Dublin	New 32-classroom school

North County Dublin is the area with the youngest population in the country and there is a huge demand for facilities given the major increase in the number of young families who have moved to the area over the years.

Last year alone, we opened St George's NS in Balbriggan, Rush and Lusk Educate Together, Gaelscoil Balbriggan, Bracken Education Together in Balbriggan and Skerries Educate Together National School at Kelly's Bay.

I continue to work closely with representatives from local schools around Balbriggan Ward area to make sure that their individual cases and issues are brought before and looked at by the Minister and given the current economic climate, I am pleased that the Government is thinking long-term and remains committed to the provision of educational facilities and resources.

The school's capital programme could also provide employment for local builders who may be facing difficulties at this time.

If you require further information on the above projects please do not hesitate to contact my office.

O'BRIEN WELCOMES PROGRESS ON INTERIM SCHOOL SUBSTITUTION ARRANGEMENTS

Confirmation circulars setting out interim arrangements for substitution in schools for the rest of school year have been published by the Education Department.

I am pleased that an agreement has been reached on this matter. This move follows discussions between the Department and the management of post-primary and primary schools in relation to proposals made by the schools regarding current arrangements for supervision and substitution and in other areas where savings can be made.

The proposals included the identification by post-primary management bodies of annual savings of €16 million on substitution costs and how these savings can be made not only in the current year but on a continuing basis in future years.

The arrangements indicate that in primary schools there will be substitute cover for teachers on uncertified sick leave other than on the first day of absence.

In a school where more than one teacher is absent on the first day of uncertified sick leave, substitute cover will be provided for the second and subsequent teachers that are absent. In schools with two teachers or less, cover will be provided where any classroom teacher is absent. The interim arrangements for primary schools have an estimated cost of €2m.

There will be a full review of substitution and supervision scheme and I am confident that these measures will provide the Department and Management bodies with the time they need to establish a new scheme.

PROFILE OF DARRAGH O'BRIEN T.D.

First-time elected T.D. for Dublin North to Dáil Éireann in 2007.

- Vice Chairman on the Dáil Committee of Public Accounts
- Convenor on Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs
- Member of Select Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence and Women's Rights

REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR TO DÁIL DEBATES PARTICULARLY IN THE AREAS OF FINANCE AND DISABILITY.

A NEW MULTI-SPORTS ACADEMY FOR FINGAL

The developing area of Lusk has been chosen as the recommended site for the location of Fingal's €10 million Multi-Sports Academy.

I have been a huge advocate of this project (and in general all new sports facilities throughout Fingal) and have given it my full support since it was first announced sometime ago. Lusk will provide the ideal location for the Academy. It will be a great addition to the area and to the community as a whole. The facility will cater for a number of sports including soccer, gaelic football and rugby. It will give local clubs in Lusk, Rush

and the Fingal area, a venue where they can train, play and avail of top class state-of-the-art facility. The Multi-Sports Academy will also act as a training facility for Sporting Fingal.

As your local T.D., I have formally put on record to Fingal County Council my support for this venture and for its location in Lusk. I have offered the council any assistance that they require. If you have any questions or queries regarding this New Multi-Sports Academy or if I can be of assistance on any other matter, please feel free to contact me.



DARRAGH OBRIEN T.D. WITH FIANNA FAÏL LOCAL AREA REPRESENTATIVE STEPHEN O'CONNELL AT SITE OF THE NEW MULTI-SPORTS ACADEMY SITE IN LUSK



DARRAGH OBRIEN T.D. PICTURED WITH WILLIAM AND NIALL MCGRATH OF AGRIO BIO-FUEL IRELAND LTD AT THEIR STROG PLANT IN OLDTOWN.

ALTERNATIVE GREEN ENERGY IN FINGAL

I recently visited Agri Bio-Fuel Ireland Ltd a New Business Venture in Oldtown, Co Dublin who are championing the cause for a Green Energy in Fingal and around Ireland. We are very fortunate that our country has so many natural resources that we can call upon. As a Government I know we are committed to utilising these resources a lot more than we are currently doing so we will be less dependent on importing our energy requirements into our businesses and households.

Agri Bio-Fuel Ireland Ltd, is a newly formed family run business and their background has been in farming in North County Dublin since the late 1800's. With current global trends turning to environmental awareness the McGrath family decided to look to alternative "green energy" about three years ago. They looked at their cereal crops and saw that straw was the answer and from that idea they

developed a straw briquette which they named as STROGS.

This straw is a "by-product" from their cereal production, so they are not producing crops for energy alone, but are, in fact, utilising one crop for both food and energy. It was important to them, as a family company, that they found a solution to the "Food Vs Energy" debate in this case. All their straw comes from local farmers. Now, with this new market opening up to farmers they can increase their profit from their cereal grain production.

I am delighted to see that this new enterprise will generate new local jobs and benefit the local economy at a time when "green energy" and "energy security" is vital for the Irish economy going forward into the future. If you require any further information on the above product please do not hesitate to contact me.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN FINGAL

ABOUT AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Affordable Housing allows first time buyers to purchase a property through the County Council for a significantly lower cost than buying privately. An affordable home is a home that is sold at cost price rather than market value. Over the past number of years Fingal County Council has been proactive in providing homes within the county at affordable prices. Since 2001, in excess of 1,200 properties have been sold under the Affordable Housing/Shared Ownership Scheme. These properties are either purpose built by Fingal County Council or acquired under Part V of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2002. Throughout 2009, many more homes will become available throughout the county. When houses or apartments are available for sale, they will be offered to people who have received provisional loan approval under the terms of the Scheme

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Applicants must meet the following general criteria:

- First Time Buyers. Certain exceptions apply e.g. if legally separated or divorced
- In full-time permanent employment for at least 6 months prior to making an application
- Meet the income limit set out below.

THE FOLLOWING INCOME LIMITS WILL APPLY:

Single Applicant: Income must be less than €60,000.00 in the previous tax year

This is based on P60 & P21 for the previous tax year
OR

If you are Self-Employed based on the Notice of Assessment from the Revenue Commissioners for the previous tax year.

Joint Applicants: €165,000.00 N.B. This is based on the following calculation:

Principal Earner's income X 2.5 + Second Earner's income, this figure must be less than €165,000.00 Based on P60 & P21 for each applicant for previous tax year

OR

If you are Self-Employed based on the Notice of Assessment from the Revenue Commissioners for the previous tax year.

HOW DO YOU APPLY?

To apply for the Affordable Housing Scheme please contact our office to get details or the Affordable Housing Section, Grove Road, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15 at 8905591 to obtain a copy.



BRIAN KINANE (SECRETARY, BALBRIGGAN AWARENESS OF DRUGS GROUP), LIZ FANNING (TREASURER, BALBRIGGAN AWARENESS OF DRUGS GROUP), DARRAGH O'BRIEN T.D., MINISTER JOHN CURRAN T.D., PADDY O'SHEA (CHAIR, BALBRIGGAN AWARENESS OF DRUGS GROUP), CLLR. DAVID O'CONNOR.

O'BRIEN ORGANISES MEETING WITH DRUGS MINISTER TO DISCUSS BANNING 'PARTY PILL' SHOPS

I organised a meeting in Dáil Éireann recently with the Balbriggan Awareness of Drugs Group and Minister for State with Responsibility for National Drugs Strategy, John Curran, to discuss the opening of a shop in Balbriggan that sells so-called 'party pills' and 'herbal highs', following growing concern in the community.

Balbriggan Awareness of Drugs Group made contact with me in relation to their concerns about the opening of the so-called 'Head Shop' in Balbriggan Town Centre, that sells 'party pills' and 'herbal highs'. We decided the best course of action was to meet the Minister and present to him their views in relation to the need for legislation to ban these types of shops across the country.

We had an extremely constructive discussion on this serious matter. Cllr. David O'Connor, the Group and I met the Minister for over an hour where the group presented the Minister with their research about the dangers of the products being sold in 'Head Shops'.

The Minister explained that he is actively

looking into the best way to ban these types of shops and has already sought advice from the Attorney General as to how legislation in this area could be brought about.

We currently have two 'Head Shops' in Dublin North; one in Swords and one in Balbriggan. I do not believe that these types of shops should be allowed to open in our towns and cities across the country. I will continue to work on this matter in Dáil Éireann in conjunction with the Minister to ensure that legislation is brought before the Dáil to ban these shops and their produce.

I would like to commend Balbriggan Awareness of Drugs group for all their work on this issue and indeed on the excellent work that they undertake for their community every day since they were established in 1995.

This is an issue of very grave concern to many people in Dublin North and I would like to assure everyone who has been in contact with me about this issue that I will continue to work on this matter on their behalf.

NATIONAL INSULATION PROGRAMME

The National Insulation Programme for economic recovery has now been launched. The three-strand insulation programme will cut heating bills for householders, reduce carbon emissions and create thousands of jobs both directly and indirectly over the course of 2009.

In the context of the economic crisis, there is an opportunity to redirect our economy and refocus state and private investment onto a more sustainable path. This Government announcement of €100 million for this year will unlock the huge potential of energy efficiency for our economy.

Energy efficiency/insulation programmes help provide for economic competitiveness, security of energy supply and tackle climate change. These are the three pillars of the Government's energy policy.

This energy efficiency stimulus programme will be divided into three packages, with the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources taking a co-ordinating role.

Insulation makes homes warmer and more comfortable. Householders can expect to halve their heating bills with reductions of €700 per annum. This means more money in their pockets. Construction workers will benefit from the thousands of jobs these measures we create. These will be jobs for trades-people throughout the country.

The programme will consist of a number of grant schemes:

1. The Home Energy Saving Scheme (private middle income homes) - €50 million
2. Warmer Homes Scheme and Local Authority housing (low income private homes and rented local authority housing) - €50 million

For further information applying for the schemes, Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI) can be contacted at www.sei.ie/hes or by calling the dedicated phone line 1850 927 000. Or you can contact me at my office numbers detailed below.

O'BRIEN WELCOMES DECISION ON DISABILITY

I welcome the Government's decision to continue to pay Disability Allowance to all 16 and 17 year olds. I have long campaigned on disability issues.

It is vital that this Government continues to encourage and support those with a disability in seeking further education or employment. The Minister for Social Welfare and Family Affairs, Mary Hanafin T.D. met with representative groups who opposed changes to the disability allowance. As a result, the Minister has decided that the Disability Allowance will continue to be paid to 16 and 17 year olds. The Disability Allowance will increase to €204.30 from January 2009.

The Disability Area is an absolute priority for me and I will continue to work on behalf of this sector in Dáil Éireann. If I can ever be of assistance to any constituent in this area please do not hesitate to contact me.

BENEFITS 2009:

	2008	2009
State Contributory Pension:		
Under 80:	€223.30	€230.30
80 or over:	€233.30	€240.30
State Non-Contributory Pension:		
Under 80:	€212.00	€219.00
80 or over:	€222.00	€229.00
Widow's/Widower's Contributory Pension:		
Under 66	€203.30	€209.80
66 and under 80	€223.30	€230.30
80 or over	€233.30	€240.30
Widow's/Widower's Non-Contributory Pension:		
Personal Rate	€197.80	€204.30
Invalidity Pension:		
Under 65:	€203.30	€209.80
Age 65 :	€223.30	€230.30
Carer's Benefit:	€214.70	€221.20
Occupational Injuries Benefit – Death Benefit Pension		
Under 66	€227.70	€234.70
66 and under 80	€227.70	€234.70
80 or over	€237.70	€244.70
Occupational Injuries Benefit – Disablement Pension	€228.90	€235.40
Jobseeker's Benefit/Illness/Injury Benefit/Health and Safety Benefits:	€197.80	€204.30
Guardian's Contributory Allowance/ Guardian's Non-Contributory Pension	€170.00	€176.50
Blind Person's Pension:	€197.80	€204.30
One-Parent Family Payment: (including one child)	€221.80	€230.30
Carer's Allowance:		
Under 66	€214.00	€220.50
66 or over	€232.00	€239.00
Disability Allowance/ Jobseeker's Allowance/Supplementary Welfare Allowance/ Pre-Retirement Allowance/	€197.80	€204.30

FIVE BALBRIGGAN WARD SCHOOLS GET €162,500 FUNDING BOOST FOR ICT UPGRADES

I have been campaigning strongly for education resources for schools in Fingal and I am delighted to announce that €162,500 in funding has been allocated by the Government for the purchase of high-tech IT equipment at 5 schools in the Balbriggan Ward.

The Government have made commitment to make information technology a central part of the learning process from the early stages of education. Each school will receive €5,000 per classroom for the purchase of computer hardware, software and digital equipment.

This is the first time there has been funding per classroom at primary level and I am delighted that such significant funding has been allocated each school.

The schools in North County Dublin to be allocated funding are as follows:

SCHOOLS	AMOUNT ALLOCATED
Bracken Educate Together National School	€48,500
St. Georges National School, Balbriggan	€44,000
Rush & Lusk Educate Together National School	€35,000
Gaelscoil Baile Brigin, Castlelands	€26,500
Skerries Educate Together National School	€8,500

As a Government we are very conscious of the need to invest in education in technology from an early stage. I understand that every school around the country, in which major construction work was completed in 2008, is now to receive this considerable ICT investment.

The National Centre for Technology in Education will advise the school of the range of equipment available and of appropriate equipment specification which may include a fixed digital projector, an internet-enabled laptop computer and a visualiser along with classroom computers.

The longer term goal of the Government to increase the take-up of science, engineering and technology courses in third-level institutions to help build up what the government is calling a 'knowledge' economy, which will help the country remain strong in the globalised economy.

IT skills are required in many jobs now and this advancement in equipment provision will benefit children regardless of the industry they will eventually work in.



DARRAGH PICTURED OUTSIDE DÁIL ÉIREANN WITH PROSPER FINGAL ON A RECENT VISIT TO SEE THEIR LOCAL T.D.

PROSPER FINGAL PLANS TO GO AHEAD – O'BRIEN

"I am delighted that the Minister of State, with the responsibility for Disability & Mental Health, John Moloney, has confirmed that planned services will proceed, meaning Prosper Fingal will be receiving the disability services outlined in the HSE's 2008 service Plan".

An additional €50m was provided to the HSE in the 2008 Budget to fund a range of additional services under what is called the Multi-Annual Investment Programme for Disability.

Developments will include new day places for young people leaving school and additional therapy

supports for pre-school children and for children and for children with autism.

Deputy O'Brien said: "Prosper Fingal provides an excellent service in North County Dublin. Since its foundation, Prosper Fingal has grown significantly and developed a wide range of services and supports for people with disabilities and their families".

Darragh has commended the staff and management of the organisation on all the work they had put in to ensure that their development funding was in place

YOUR FIANNA FÁIL TEAM

I'm delighted to introduce Dermot Murray from Balbriggan and Stephen O'Connell from Lusk as our new Fianna Fáil representatives for the Balbriggan Ward. Dermot and Stephen are very well known in their respective towns and surrounding areas and work hard for their community through their involvement with various groups, clubs and organisations that serve local interests. I have no doubt that their inclusion as Fianna Fáil representatives will be a major advantage to the people of the Balbriggan Ward Area.



DERMOT MURRAY

Born and reared in Balbriggan. Married to Mary with 2 children Dermot & Karen. Station Officer with Balbriggan Fire Brigade with over 20yrs service. President of The S.V.D.P. in Balbriggan the last number of years.



STEPHEN O'CONNELL

Resident of Lusk. Married to Mary with 3 children Claire, Joseph and Kevin. Originally from Tipperary and living in Lusk for well over 20 years. Chairman of Round Tower's of Lusk GAA club. Secretary of Thomas Ashe Cumann, Lusk.

YOUR LOCAL BALBRIGGAN TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE

I have been working closely with Balbriggan Town Councillor Gerry Buckley on a number of issues regarding Balbriggan Town. Gerry, has, for the last number of years been looking after the needs of residents and businesses in Balbriggan and has given great service to the community of Balbriggan in the Town Council.



COUNCILLOR GERRY BUCKLEY

Gerry is a first time elected Balbriggan Town Councillor in 2004. Married to Erica with 3 young children. Manager of local Moriarty's SuperValu in Balbriggan. Works tirelessly with local charities, clubs, organisations and residents of Balbriggan.

FINGAL LEADER PARTNERSHIP INVESTMENT OF €7,766,780

A total of €425.4 million will be provided throughout the country under the Leader Partnership, 55% from the European Union and 45% from the Exchequer, of which €7.7 million is allocated to the Leader Programme for Fingal. This is almost treble the amount available in the last Programme (2000-2006), and the largest ever package for rural development. The funding will be channelled through the new, integrated Local Action Groups to support and facilitate the continued development of rural communities all over Ireland.

Each of these Local Action Groups will distribute funding to community groups and individuals in rural areas for the range of activities to be funded under this Programme. These activities are varied and include diversification into non-agricultural activities, support for business creation, encouragement of tourism activities, basic services for the economy and rural population, village renewal and development, conservation and upgrading of rural heritage and training and information.

To receive funding, the new companies must be fully set up before the contracts are signed. In addition, Rural Social Scheme participants must be fully transferred to the new companies. Please do not hesitate to contact me office if you require further details on the Leader Funding Programme.

DARRAGH O'BRIEN T.D.

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CLINIC TIMES AT MALAHIDE CONSTITUENCY OFFICE
MONDAY to FRIDAY (9AM – 6PM) SATURDAY (10AM – 3PM)
EVERY FRIDAY AT RUSH COMMUNITY CENTRE (2PM – 5PM)

FIANNA FÁIL
THE REPUBLICAN PARTY