



Darragh O'Brien TD

Spokesperson on Foreign Affairs and Trade



A Chara,

It is an honour for me to serve in Dáil Éireann as your TD. I want to again thank you for your ongoing support.

Since my re-election to the Dáil in February 2016, I have and continue to, play a very active role in the Oireachtas on your behalf.

This newsletter is a summary of some of the matters, both national and local, that I have been working on;

- Policing and a Crime in Fingal - need for more Gardaí
- Mortgage arrears and Repossessions
- Pyrite - Call for new Pyrite scheme
- Brexit - recent visit by the British Ambassador to Fingal
- Pensions - Airport Pension Scheme and need to strengthen regulations
- Cystic Fibrosis - Orkambi Life changing drug
- Tourism initiatives - Swords, Skerries and Malahide

There are many other items which I am working on regularly on your behalf, but space doesn't allow me in this newsletter to highlight them all.

You can sign up for regular updates on my website www.darraghobrien.ie.

As always, if ever I can be of assistance to you, your family, or community, please do not hesitate to contact me. All my contact details are supplied on this newsletter.

Le gach dea-ghuí,



Policing/Crime in Fingal

Securing additional Gardaí for North County Dublin is an absolute priority for me.

From Balbriggan to Rush & Lusk, Swords, Donabate & Portrane to Portmarnock and Malahide, Skerries to Naul and beyond, crime is a serious issue. I have once again raised the lack of Gardaí in North Dublin with the Tánaiste & Minister for Justice Frances Fitzgerald.

The reality is that the Dublin Fingal area has experienced a cut of over 20% to Garda resources over the past five years. We simply do not have enough Gardaí to prevent criminal activity in North Dublin. I recently met with local senior Gardaí to discuss the ongoing issue of resources for North Dublin and the surge in violent crime.

We need to support rank and file Gardaí in the hard work that they do in our community but it needs to be acknowledged that we need more Gardaí assigned to police our community. Other measures such as

improved CCTV schemes and establishing a community alert groups also play their part in the fight against crime.

Fianna Fáil and I are committed to supporting our Gardaí and strengthening community policing. We insisted that increased Garda recruitment be included in the Confidence and Supply arrangement to facilitate a minority Government. This agreement will provide an additional 2,000 Gardaí which will in turn lead to an increase in the number of officers assigned to community policing.

I want extra Gardaí for North Dublin and be assured that I will continue to fight for this in the Dáil.

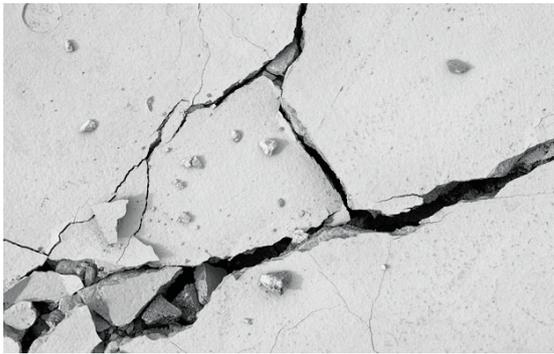
Responses to Parliamentary Questions that I tabled to the Tánaiste & Minister for Justice & Equality Frances Fitzgerald TD:

GARDA STRENGTH DMR NORTH DIVISION							
STATION	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
MALAHIDE	37	35	34	34	30	29	31
SWORDS	84	77	77	74	70	65	72
COOLOCK	120	117	114	112	109	103	105
LUSK	7	6	8	10	10	10	10
BALBRIGGAN	68	70	69	64	62	64	69
GARRISTOWN	3	3	2	2	2	2	2

*Coolock, Malahide and Swords Garda stations form the R District which comes under the DMR North Division.



AT OPENING OF REFURBISHED AND EXTENDED SCOUT DEN IN MALAHIDE WITH CLLR EOGHAN O'BRIEN



Pyrite

I have called on the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, Simon Coveney T.D. to overhaul the government's current Pyrite Remediation Scheme.

The present scheme only addresses the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the extent of the pyrite problems in North Dublin and beyond.

The criteria must be expanded to make all homes affected by pyrite, eligible for remediation, and not just the 1,000 which have been admitted into the current governments' inadequate scheme.

I will continue to call on the government to review the current scheme with a view to expanding eligibility so that no home with pyrite is left behind.

British Ambassadors Visit to Fingal

I was delighted that Robin Barnett, the British Ambassador to Ireland, accepted my invitation to visit Fingal. Events were organised in conjunction with both the Fingal Chamber of Commerce and Fingal County Council.

Trade between Ireland and Britain currently amounts to over €1 billion per week in goods and services which underlines the importance of the relationship between the two countries.

In light of the UK Referendum to vote to leave the European Union, it is more crucial now than ever before to protect our trading relationship with Britain.

Businesses, particularly in the export industry, need swift, decisive and confident leadership from our government and state agencies. Contingency plans for business sectors affected by the Brexit decision, up to and including transitional aid measures, need to be urgently outlined. These plans are critical for Irish business, especially those whose focus is exporting.

That's why it's imperative that the Government explores every mechanism available to offset the adverse consequences of Brexit, and ensure that our businesses are insulated as much as possible from this drastic situation.

Fianna Fáil has consistently argued that the government must have a clear and comprehensive plan of action for dealing with these challenges. It is clear that a coordinated effort is required to deal



VISIT TO ONE4ALL WITH MICHAEL DAWSON AND AMBASSADOR ROBIN BARNETT

with the aftermath of Brexit. To this end, bringing together a wide range of industry leaders and local business owners demonstrates a willingness to engage and identify practical solutions to minimise any impact of the British exit from the EU.

It was most apparent during the site visits with the Ambassador, that he is conscious of the important connection between Fingal and the British export market.

We need to work together in a coordinated way to protect the thousands of Irish jobs and livelihoods that depend on trade with Britain.



SPEAKING AT FINGAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE EVENT

Home Repossessions

The continued stream of home seizures and repossessions which have occurred as of late is alarming. Let me say this: **Both I and my party are totally committed to finding a real workable solution for this crisis.**

More than 2,000 homes seizure cases were listed in the courts before Christmas, and in Dublin city and county more than 300 cases came before the County Registrar in the last month alone. There are families throughout our community who are fearful of losing their home, and the last Government failed to fight the corner of these homeowners.

Home seizures and repossessions of family homes must stop now. It is no longer acceptable to sit back and allow this situation become a crisis. We saw that happen with homelessness and housing emergency, which has been exacerbated by rising mortgage arrears.

This is an issue that I have raised on a daily basis, and I will continue until we put in place a proper plan to help people at risk of repossession.

Also we have a Fianna Fáil Bill to tackle excessive variable mortgage interest rates, at the Finance Committee stage in the Dáil, and we're pushing on with that to try and get you the mortgage relief you deserve. Irish banks are charging Irish citizens nearly DOUBLE the euro area average mortgage rate, which is a total disgrace.



Orkambi / Life changing CF Drug

The decision by the HSE not to approve Orkambi, is extremely disheartening for people living with Cystic Fibrosis, and is so short-sighted from a health point of view.

There are around 1,200 CF sufferers who would benefit from Orkambi and I have been campaigning for the drug to be approved since October 2015.

This is a life or death situation for these people, and I urge the government make this drug available to those who need it.

The facts are quite clear. Orkambi works. This drug has been approved by the EU Medicines Agency, and is proven to be of major benefit for cystic fibrosis sufferers. The clinical trials have shown that it can increase a person's lifespan, and also improve their quality of life.

The value of life and clear savings of treatment with this drug through the reduced need for acute care, far outweighs any monetary cost, and therefore every effort should be made to have this drug put on shelves in pharmacies nationwide.

I have called on the Health Minister to make Orkambi available to patients under the Long-Term Illness Scheme. I am doing everything I can to make sure that this happens.



ATTENDING IASS PENSION SCHEME PROTEST OUTSIDE THE DÁIL

Airport Pension Scheme

As a result of the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2013 and the State Airports Act 2014 - the airport pension scheme (IASS) was torn apart - retired members lost six weeks of their pension, and long-serving deferred members lost up to 60% of their entitlements.

Many other employers in this country, particularly those with defined benefit schemes, have begun to wind down their pension plans.

The destruction of the IASS pension scheme, in which 15,000 members were removed from the pension scheme unilaterally, was aided and abetted by the last Government.

The private pension levy that took €2.6 billion out of people's pension funds further undermined pension provision in this country. **Be assured that the fate of the IASS pension scheme members and the overall issue of pension regulation is a real priority for me and my party.**



CAMPAINING WITH CF SUFFERERS OUTSIDE LEINSTER HOUSE WITH MICHAEL MCENERY

Tourism



AT EASTER 1916 CENTENARY EVENT WITH CLLR EOGHAN O'BRIEN IN MALAHIDE
The Casino House Malahide

County Architect Fionnuala May has presented updated proposals for the Casino development following the results of the public consultation at the December Fingal County Council Area Committee meeting.

Cllr Eoghan O'Brien and I are delighted to see that extra floor-space will be provided, versus the original proposal. This will allow for a larger exhibition space for the Fry Model Railway exhibit, as well as a direct link between the extension and the outhouse building. These changes are a direct result of some of the issues raised during the public consultation.

The project will go out to tender in the coming months. While progress to date has been slower than we would have liked, this is a huge milestone in delivering what will be a fantastic addition to Fingal's heritage offering.

The generous bequest from the late Mr Gaffney helped bring this iconic building into public ownership. It has also secured a future home for the Fry Model Railway exhibit. Fingal County Council is providing an additional €1 Million in direct funding for this project.

When this is delivered, Casino House and the Fry Model Railway will be a great addition to Malahide, and will no doubt be a huge attraction for locals and visitors alike.

Swords Castle & Cultural Quarter

I am a big supporter of all the marvellous work on Swords Castle and the plan for the development of Swords Cultural Quarter. **It was always clear to me that Swords Castle should be the principal engine of tourism growth in Swords.** The accelerated rebuild and opening up of Castle facilities should be an economic priority. The planned Swords Heritage Centre, Theatre and the new Library, as well as quality outdoor performance facilities, will form an integral part of this planned development.

The Castle is now open to the public, complete with a new Tourist Office, with the adjacent Chapel offering a glimpse into the medieval origins of the space.

I compliment the excellent staff of the Tourist Office, and I fully agree with the Mayor of Fingal, Cllr Darragh Butler, who said that the Castle is regaining its role as a truly important focal point of our county town. It will encourage locals and tourists alike to come and experience the history and grandeur of this site.



LAUNCH OF SWORDS CULTURAL QUARTER WITH MAYOR DARRAGH BUTLER AND CLLR ADRIAN HENCHY

Skerries Wins the SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition

The entire community of Skerries and their brilliant Tidy Towns Committee deserve the highest praise for their magnificent achievement in winning the SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition for the first time with 327 points.

The adjudicators lavished praise on the attractive streetscapes, the beautiful shop fronts with their traditional signage, the wildlife corridors maintained throughout this busy community, as well as the appropriate planting that so enhances the streets, the edges, and even the beach. But most of all, they praised the way the Tidy Town Committee has reached out to all the youth groups and new residents of Skerries, and how it uses a wide range of channels, to keep communications humming through the whole community.

Congratulations to all involved. Well done!



WITH Cllr BRIAN DENNEHY AND MEMBERS OF SKERRIES TIDY TOWN COMMITTEE



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