

MICHAEL McNAMARA TD

Labour

WORKING FOR CLARE



BRIGHT NEW FUTURE FOR SIXMILEBRIDGE SCHOOL CHILDREN

After years of campaigning and hard work it was with some satisfaction that I learnt that St Finnachta's National School Sixmilebridge is to receive a new school building. My colleague, the Minister for Education Jan O'Sullivan, has this week announced that Sixmilebridge is to be included in the Schools Building Programme.

The long journey to this day has not been an easy one, with local campaigners meeting years of disappointment along the way. It is indeed a testament to the dedication of the school community that a new building has finally been secured.

Having worked with the school during the past four and a half years, I know firsthand the work involved. I was happy to play my part by continuously lobbying for this essential building. In June 2012, I asked then Minister for Education Ruairi Quinn to visit the school to see for himself how necessary, and indeed urgent, the provision of this school was.

When Minister Jan O'Sullivan took over the role as Minister for Education, I felt it necessary that she was also aware of the urgent need of a new school for Sixmilebridge.

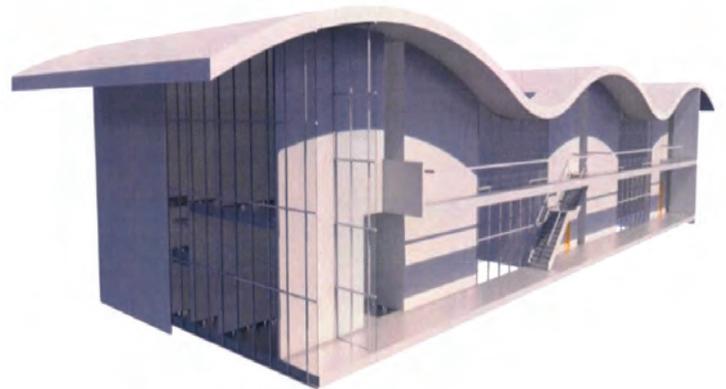
In February this year she agreed to meet with a delegation from the school who once again pressed upon her the seriousness of the situation.

This hard work paid off, and after years of disappointments, I was delighted that the Minister announced on Tuesday November 17 that the pupils of Sixmilebridge will soon be taught in a brand new school.

The board of management, parents, teachers and indeed the pupils have been campaigning for years for a new school building, and with good reason. The current building, which was constructed in 1934, has for some time been far too small to cater for the growing school population.

The new two storey building will be more than twice the size of the current school when it is completed.

This new school will provide 24 new classrooms and will address all of the overcrowding issues. The pupils can also look forward to new external play areas and three ball courts, while 46 car parking spaces are also to be provided.



SPORTING SUCCESS

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Sixmilebridge's Senior Hurlers on winning the County Championship. I am sure the community that watched and supported these players as they progressed through the different grades and age groups are particularly proud.

The team's success proves that the work carried out in sport, recreational and leisure clubs and organisations in any community are invaluable. And while the Government cannot repay the hard work of the dedicated volunteers who maintain these associations, it is vital that it continue to support their efforts.

Last year Sixmilebridge GAA Club received €80,000 from the Sports Capital Programme. Clubs like Sixmilebridge GAA Club are the back bone of many communities. This large and growing club now caters for more than 30 teams and continues to work to encourage more young people to get involved in sport. I am conscious that the recreational needs of a growing community such as Sixmilebridge are ever evolving and I am happy to work with the GAA club, or any other sporting organisation, as they expand to meet these needs.



FREE GP CARE

As many as 3,900 Clare children under the age of six are in receipt of free GP care, with 96 per cent of local doctors signing up for the scheme.

As part of Budget 2016, Free GP care is to be extended to children under the age of 12. This move must be welcomed, especially by young families who worry about not being able to afford a visit to the doctor when their child falls ill.

Free care is also being provided to all those over 70 years of age. It has been a longstanding objective of the Labour Party's to establish free GP care to all, and I believe these moves to ensure free care to the youngest and oldest in our society is a move in the right direction – a foundation we can continue to build on.

The five years since the last election have been painful for almost all in our society. However the pain has not been without purpose and as a people we are beginning to rebuild our country and hope is being restored.

As people return to work and unemployment falls, the Government is finally able to invest again in our future.

I believe that investment in education is essential to the future of our State. Therefore, I was delighted that after years of hard work and disappointment, a new school building has finally been sanctioned for Sixmilebridge by my colleague, the Minister for Education Jan O'Sullivan.

Clare is experiencing an increase in employment and unemployment is down by almost 30 per cent since 2011.

Primary schools are the bedrock of any community and the construction of a new school to replace the prefabs that a generation of Sixmilebridge school children have had as a school is an important investment in the future of Sixmilebridge and its community.

I am grateful for the support I received from the people of Sixmilebridge at the last election and during my time as a backbench TD. I have done my best to improve the quality of life for the people of Clare, and will continue to do so

Yours sincerely,



Michael McNamara TD

Constituency offices:

New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare

Skycourt, Shannon, Co. Clare

Phone: 065 68 93639

Email: michael.mcnamara@oir.ie

Web: labour.ie/michaelmcnamara



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