

County Hall plans get the nod

DAVID TUCKER
Staff Reporter

PLANS for the refurbishment of County Hall have been given the nod by county councillors, despite an 11th hour appeal for them again to consider a greenfield site for a new £25 million county building complex.

The overall cost of the project, which will include a new building at the site of Dr. Furlong's, moving the IT department there from county hall, an enlarged and modernised chamber and extensive internal remodelling of the old jail, has been put in the region of £15 million to £16 million.

The cost of moving to a greenfield site was put at around £10 million more. However, with the existing County Hall only being worth around £1 million, the cost was considered too high.

During a progress briefing by Alastair Coey architects and Hall Black Douglas, councillors were told it could be 18 months to two years before the move to Dr. Furlong's would be possible. Following opposition from local people, the issue has gone to appeal at An Bord Pleanála.

But members were told that the various phases of the development - the jail, the engineering department and the council chamber and meeting rooms - could proceed in tandem with each other.

The cost of refurbishing the existing council chamber, installing a lift through three floors to provide disabled access, and redesigning it to provide a modern working environment would cost in the region of £536,000.

The cost of developing the meeting rooms and support facilities on the floor below was put at £190,500.

Deputy Brendan Howlin said there didn't seem to have been much progress, but the consultants said things were proceeding as fast as could be expected.

And aspects of the refurbishment of the chamber may not need planning permission because of the extensive work already carried out there.

Appearing for consideration to be given to a greenfield site, Senator Jim Walsh and several other members, said the lack of adequate parking was a serious issue.

"It seems to be a waste of taxpayer's money to go down the route that we're going down in relation to this one," said Deputy John Browne.

"There are no car parking facilities here. If Dr. Furlong's is going to be developed, it's going to be mayhem," said the deputy.



Wexford County Hall, set for refurbishment.

Architect Stephen Douglas said the Dr. Furlong's development included proper traffic management.

"What's the position with regard to car parking? That's the biggest issue we have. I came here a moment ago and it was impossible to get anywhere to park," said Cllr. Leo Carthy.

Cllr. Anna Fenlon, who is partially disabled, said cars were parked across the disabled spaces as well.

"Am I going to be reduced to someone giving me a piggy back up here?" she asked.

"It makes no sense to try to continue to develop here. Don't compound the error that we

made previously," said Senator Walsh.

"Car parking is a very live issue," said Mr. Douglas, "disabled parking spaces should be properly monitored and maintained."

Despite the reservations of some members, councillors agreed to proceed with the project.

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Fill a shoe box for Christmas

OPERATION Christmas Child gift-filled shoe-box appeal is now underway.

The project, which is run by the Samaritan's Purse, distributes shoe boxes filled with toys, small gifts and games to children all over the world.

Last year, over four million children received shoe boxes filled with all sorts of goodies - 35,000 shoe boxes were sent from Ireland, 430 of which came from Co. Wexford.

This year, local shoe box collectors are hoping to send more shoe boxes to suffering children of war, natural disaster, poverty, illness or neglect.

At present some 32 schools in the county are taking part in the appeal, collecting items such as small toys and games, dolls, balls, skipping ropes, school supplies such as pencils, pens, rulers, exercise books, sweets, toiletries, clothing such as scarves, hats and Christmas cards.

These gifts are maybe simple but are like a ray of sunshine to those who receive them.

If you are interested in making a few children happy, why not ask any shoe shop for an empty box. Then wrap both box and lid separately in Christmas wrapping paper or old posters, fill the box with gifts and finally write a simple letter or Christmas card and send a photo of yourself. Each box should also include £2 to cover the cost of getting the box to its destination.

If you have any further questions, you can contact Sue Tobin on 054 47792 or Johanna Austin on 053 40987.

Sr Janja extends her thanks for aid

THE North Wexford Medjugorje Pilgrimage group will be joined by a special visitor in Kilrush Parish church tomorrow (Thursday) night, in the form of Sr Janja Boras.

Sr Janja is well-known to all members of the group, as trips to all members of the group, as trips to the orphanage she runs at the Franciscan Convent in the nearby city of Mostar have been a regular feature of pilgrimages to Medjugorje in recent years.

The orphanage has been one of the main beneficiaries of the Bosnia Aid campaign run by Gorey businessman Kevin Leacy and a dedicated

team of helpers. These include Morriscastle caravan park owner Johnny Murphy, who runs a hugely-successful coffee morning in Kilmuckridge each year which always raises thousands of pounds for the orphanage.

Sr Janja will tomorrow night personally thank the people of Wexford for all the support and generosity they have shown since the aid movement started, while the night will also feature a special Mass, celebrated by Fr Joe Power PP at 7.30 p.m.

Refreshments will follow, and all are welcome to come along.

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MODERN HOMES SHOW



At the launch of this year's Wexford Modern Homes Exhibition, which takes place in St. Peter's College from November 23-25, were (l-r): Dan Mc Grath, current Miss Ireland Caitriona Supple, and Tom Murphy, Managing Director of Modern Homes Exhibition.