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STATEMENT FROM INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE FOR KILDARE SOUTH, DR. CATHAL BERRY

Dr Cathal Berry, Independent Candidate for Kildare South, strongly disagrees with the Minister with Responsibility for Defence's blatant opportunism and electioneering at the expense of serving members of the Irish Defence Forces and the families who support them. Dr Berry is highly critical of the cynical timing of the Minister's publication of the Defence Forces 5 Year Infrastructure Programme 2020-2025 on the same day the Dáil was dissolved. Dr Berry stated that **"it is unacceptable, given that Minister Kehoe has been in office for nine years and in that time has done nothing to increase the standing of the Defence Forces and indeed, has overseen the decay of many military installations around the country. Many of these infrastructural projects were announced years ago and are now just being re-announced again as a shallow publicity exercise to create the false impression that action is actually being taken"**.

Dr Berry has witnessed first-hand the state of disrepair that the Curragh Camp is in, the main Training Centre for the Irish Defence Forces. The publication of a 5 Year Plan is too little too late and will not detract from the real issues facing the organization. Serving members of the Irish Defence Forces and their families deserve more respect and the people of Kildare South deserve to have a TD who will not only protect one of the main employers in the area but who will also future-proof the organization for generations to come. The people of Kildare South are proud of their associations with the Defence Forces and Dr Berry will ensure that the Defence Forces can meet their expectations as a world-class military, through a clear, coherent National Security Strategy, a contemporary Defence Policy and clear operational outputs both at home and overseas.

Dr. Berry reiterates his commitment to the Defence Forces and to the military families living in his constituency. He has always believed that to serve one's country is the highest form of citizenship and he has not been afraid to serve Ireland in some of the most dangerous and volatile regions on earth. It is unacceptable that those who gave their lives in the service of peace and those who have and continue to sacrifice for their country, are being treated with the utmost disrespect by their serving Minister who only sees their worth, now he is seeking re-election.