

DR. CATHAL BERRY



Working for you in Kildare, Laois and Offaly

November 2020 | Newsletter



Hi Everybody,

I hope you are doing okay despite the trying circumstances we find ourselves in. Eight months on from the election it's important to update you on recent developments and reflect on how things are going. Little did we know back in February how events would play out, both nationally and internationally. The country is now grappling with three converging threats, any one of which would normally define a TD's term in office. But these are not normal times. The pandemic, the ensuing global recession and a potentially hard Brexit have led to unprecedented hardship and uncertainty across the constituency and country.

Notwithstanding the above, it is important to focus on what is within our control:

Since February I've established a high-performance team and opened constituency offices in both Newbridge and Portarlington – just like I said we would. I have been very active in the Dáil chamber. Rather than just opposing for the sake of opposing, my contribution has been respectful and constructive with emphasis on solving problems rather than causing them. Leinster House can be a tribal place at times, but the Independent brand is very useful in facilitating direct access to ministers to advocate effectively for both individual constituents and the constituency as a whole. We have set high standards in public office. Our conduct in both mainstream and social media has been exemplary. We have absolutely no fake social media accounts and we seek to neither target nor denigrate our political rivals. We would rather work collaboratively with them to improve the lives of all those living in the constituency. You can pick a fight or pick a project. We choose the latter. In addition to assisting literally hundreds of constituents with diverse issues ranging from income supports to visa applications, we have already

delivered on five significant and tangible projects: Direct financial supports for local charities, sports clubs and community projects, the completion of flood relief engineering works on the River Barrow near Monasterevin, establishment of a Business Association in Portarlington to protect jobs and to rejuvenate the local economy, successfully tabled and enacted employment protection legislation for members of the Reserve Defence Force which was signed into law by President Higgins in March and securing additional quarantine pay for Defence Forces families prior to deploying overseas.

I have also advocated strongly, both publicly and privately for: New secondary schools in Portarlington, Monasterevin and the Curragh/Newbridge/Athgarvan area, a new playground for Newbridge and an end to the dereliction in the Curragh Camp. Indeed, I look forward to organising a high-level visit to the area in the coming months.

To conclude, I will be forever grateful for everyone who worked so hard and campaigned so fiercely during the election campaign to have an Independent TD in the Kildare South constituency. It was the ultimate team performance and something we should be immensely proud of. While there can be no greater accolade than to be elected by your peers to represent them in our national parliament, it is something I try not to dwell on. Instead of concentrating on the great honor that it is, I would rather focus on the immense responsibility that it confers. Accordingly, thank you for lending me your vote and I look forward to repaying your trust in full over many years to come. Take good care,

Cathal Berry TD

Constituency Offices



I have established two new constituency offices in Newbridge and Portarlington. The team and I are delighted to finally be able to welcome constituents into the offices to assist with any issues or simply to say hello. Both constituency offices are open Monday to Friday, 10am to 1pm. As always, if there is anything I can help you with, please don't hesitate to get in contact with me or a member of the team directly. I look forward to working with you in making Kildare South a vibrant, prosperous and inclusive community for us all.

Newbridge: 045 579 053 Portarlington: 057 860 0118

Criminal Justice Bill 2020

On 23rd September, I raised several issues with Minister James Browne relating to the Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) (Amendments) Bill 2020. I welcome and support these amendments to what I consider to be a very important piece of legislation. The unambiguous and irrefutable nature of financial investigations within this arena has proven itself to be a vital component in securing convictions. I will continue to liaise with the Minister on these important issues.

Nitrous Oxide Awareness



My team worked with the Curragh Family Resource Centre to form an action group comprising of DFTC Military Police and Newbridge Garda Sergeant John Dunne. We created an awareness video to highlight the dangers associated with Nitrous Oxide, also commonly known as laughing gas or silver bullets, and help to prevent its misuse in our communities. You can view the video on my social media platforms. For further information or support please contact the Curragh Family Resource Centre.

Defence Forces

In the current Programme for Government, the need to address pay and conditions within the Defence Forces was acknowledged, with a commitment from Government to establish a Commission on the Defence Forces by the end of 2020 with a mandate to report within 12 months. I have been working alongside other elected representatives, government offices and relevant interest groups to ensure the terms of reference

will be balanced and comprehensive. I will continue to work tirelessly on behalf of the Defence Forces members and their families to advocate for better pay and conditions.



Progress to Date



In March I was successful in bringing forward an amendment to Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (Covid-19) Bill 2020, which ensured employment protection for members of the Reserve Defence Force. Also, during the month of September commitment was given that allowance payments commensurate with the 'compulsory quarantine' measures for pre-deployment personnel will be paid. In addition, a financial incentive package for the Naval Service has been introduced, the 'Sea Going Service Commitment Scheme' for the Naval Service. I have every faith that this is the start of what I hope to be a comprehensive set of measures to improve the pay and conditions for all Defence Forces members.

Cybersecurity

On 15 July I asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action & Environment the number of staff employed by the National Cyber Security Centre in each of the years 2018, 2019 and in 2020; and if he would make a statement on the matter, as I consider The National Cyber Security Centre to be a crucial component in ensuring critical infrastructure operators maintain their operations here in a secure manner. My objective was to ensure that the Programme for Government commits to the implementation of the 2019 National Cyber Security Strategy in full, as the National Cyber Security Centre, or NCSC, is the primary cyber security authority in the State. The NCSC has several roles, including leading on cyber security incident response and on the resilience and security of critical infrastructure which impacts on state agencies as well as multinational software companies based in Ireland.

Coláiste Íosagáin

At National Level, I raised the urgent need for a new build for Coláiste Íosagáin Post-Primary School in Portarlinton back in May with then Minister Joe



McHugh and also more recently with newly appointed Minister for Education and Skills, Minister Norma Foley. I will continue to strenuously pursue the advancement of this project to ensure we secure clear timelines and necessary funding to release this build. I will shortly be meeting with the Chief Project Architect in Department Offices, Tullamore to discuss the project works and will also be seeking clear financial provisions for this project in the Department's October Capital Plan.

County Council Partnerships

Productive meetings have taken place with Laois, Offaly and Kildare County Councils Senior Management Teams. Amongst topics of discussion were social housing plans, climate action, town economic development plans, water supply and Portarlinton's Market House next steps. We have strong commitment from all three County Councils with regards to the development of our constituency of Kildare



south in terms of future commitments and working together to secure both local and national funding. I am happy to offer my ongoing support to Laois, Offaly and Kildare County Council at a National Level through the Government Departments.

The River Barrow

Many of our problems with the River Barrow stem from the fact that it is bordered by three counties and in many cases one side of the river is in Laois and the other in Kildare or Offaly. Indecision often led to vital works being left on the long finger. After meetings with all three county councils there will be better co-operation in the future. Further to meetings with officials from both Kildare and Laois County Council at the river, agreement was reached to carry out works which will alleviate flooding in the Derrylea and Inchacooley areas and dredging of the Figile, a major tributary of the Barrow. The Bay bank, which was installed over sixty years ago, needs urgent repairs after many decades of neglect. Laois County Council have agreed to reinstate the bank where it was damaged and to install new sluice gates which will alleviate flooding in the whole area. Other works are being planned by Kildare County Council which will also help this area.



Portarlinton Development Plans

Following on from recent successful engagements with local business and community leaders, we look forward to pursuing a variety of projects of special interest within the town. Some of these projects include recognising Portarlinton as a Heritage Town for the 21st Century, foundation of Business Owners Association, "Next Steps" in the Market House Development in conjunction with the community and Laois County Council, development of tourism and infrastructure and reinvigorate community groups and voluntary organisations within the town. I look forward to working closely with the community to pursue these plans. Also following on from ongoing water supply issues in the town, new boreholes are urgently needed to increase the volume of raw water supply required. We are seeking a commitment from Irish Water that upgrades will be made soon in order to restore continuous supply. In the meantime, it is important that a sensible approach is taken to conserve water daily in the area between 10pm and 6am. Irish Water Helpline – 1850 278 278.

Portarlinton Business Association

The Portarlinton Business Association Committee has been recently established, bringing businesses and the people of our town together to exchange ideas and to represent the local business interests in town. Currently on the agenda we have the Portarlinton Urban Regeneration Project. Mr Simon Wall, Senior Architect with Mayo County Council, recently



delivered an online talk on how Westport Town was regenerated to success, which was extremely insightful and inspirational. Should you wish to join the PBA, please do not hesitate to contact the committee.

Issues raised in the Dáil to date



It is a privilege to represent you in Dáil Éireann. Since becoming elected, I have raised a variety of important issues which affect our constituency of Kildare South with various Government Ministers. My priorities include Health, Housing, Education, Environment and Defence Force Families. I will continue to work tirelessly to highlight the important issues which affect us all. As always, if there are any issues that I can be of assistance with, local or national, please do not hesitate to get in contact with me or a member of the team in our constituency offices.

Contact the Team



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