

# Railway project sees village on right route to tourism success

## ■ Ambitious plans for €500k revamp of Knocklong's 'historic railway station

**AINE FITZGERALD**

A PROJECT with an estimated cost of €500,000 which would greatly boost tourism figures in the region has been proposed for the village of Knocklong.

The Knocklong Railway Project was outlined in detail by Pat Walsh, chairman of Knocklong Development Association with input from Joe Moloney, vice chairman of the association, at a Cappamore-Kilmallock area meeting. The project aims to restore the site of the station master's house and grounds, creating recreational and educational facilities for the local community and visitors, as well as a commemorative space for the War of Independence in Munster.

Knocklong railway station is famous for being the place where Tipperary IRA man Sean Hogan was rescued from police custody in May, 1919.



Pat Walsh, chairman, Knocklong Development Association

Sadly, the station closed in 1977 and it is now derelict waste ground. The people of Knocklong aim to restore the station and turn it into a place where people can relax and play and where the War of Independence in Munster is commemorated.

The aim is to restore the disused station master's house and grounds, and "to develop a coherent



Joe Moloney, vice-chairman of the Knocklong association

conceptual approach that would give the site a real function once more and a sustainable future".

Specific features include a community office where meetings can take place, a museum and a community park.

"The park is to have a remembrance theme and would be the focal point for the 2019 centenary commemoration of the

rescue of Sean Hogan," Mr Walsh explained.

Knocklong railway station opened its gates in 1849, and is located on the Dublin/Cork line, one of the busiest lines in the country. The station master's house – a beautiful cut stone building was opened around the same time.

The railway contributed to the economic development of Knocklong – a creamery was established in the village and Harris' Hotel provided accommodation for weary travellers.

The rise of the motorcar in Ireland proved detrimental to train travel and from the 1950s many railway lines were closed down. In 1977 Knocklong station was shut down which began a period of decline in the village's fortunes.

In 2013 the Knocklong Development Association unveiled its plan for Knocklong – a scheme for development in the village until 2020. The plan identified

the redevelopment of the disused railway station as one of its capital development projects.

Nearly 7,000 square metres will be given over to a community park. A garden and a woodland area will boast many varieties of plants, shrubs and trees. A playground for children also forms part of the plans as well as a model railway.

The ticket office, waiting room and station master's living room will be restored to the condition they enjoyed around the time of Sean Hogan's rescue. A contemplative space in the garden will remember the rescue and other events in Munster during the War of Independence. There are also plans for a luxury, self-catering short stay apartment on the first floor of the station master's house "which will allow visitors to immerse themselves in this unique location".

For more details on the project log on to the Knocklong Railway Project on YouTube.