

Munster roll out plans for new home

"Without them [residents], we would not be rebuilding Thomond Park at all and we would have had to go somewhere else," Pat Whelan chairperson of the redevelopment committee.

by Andrew Carey

PAYING tribute to the former residents of the Knocklisheen Road houses that were purchased by the IRFU to make way for Thomond park's expansion, Pat Whelan, chairperson of the redevelopment committee thanked and praised the speedy manner in which the matter was resolved.

Speaking at the launch of the plans and concept images of the proposed development last week, Mr Whelan also commended the assistance given by the IRFU and Munster branch in taking the current 14,000 seater historic rugby venue to a new level where it will be home to some 26,000 spectators and one Heineken Cup.

"I would like to

thank Limerick City Council for being so supportive in this venture, but to the residents of Knocklisheen Road I want to say a particular thank you. We had a very difficult transaction to conclude but there was nothing but good will from them and that can not be stressed enough. The cordial and efficient manner to which negotiations were concluded is to their credit."

Munster Branch IRFU president, Ken Lyons elaborated with memories of past and present.

"There are very few rugby followers in the world who are not aware of the history and great traditions associated with Thomond Park. This wonderful redevelopment project is entirely fitting, more so in



An artist impression of the new Thomond Park shows the new state of the art stand that will replace the existing west stand and east terrace.

view of Munster's magnificent Heineken European Cup victory last weekend, so that greater capacities in

superior levels of comfort can be accommodated."

Continuing the vein of rebuilding and improvement for the future of Irish rugby, the IRFU together with the senior players announced this week at a press conference held at the O2 Customer Care Centre in Plassey, the new sponsorship deal with O2 that secures the mobile phone operator financially supporting the senior and 'A'

team for the next six years in a deal that is believed to be worth close to 1.6 million euros.

At the announcement, Andy Crawford, president of the IRFU noted; "These have been celebratory times for Irish and provincial rugby and we can celebrate the fact that O2 are joining us in buoyant times."

Irish head coach, Eddie O'Sullivan was asked about what was next for the country's

senior team and the summer tour following the Triple Crown success earlier in the year, Ulster claiming

the Celtic league top spot and Munster's Heineken Cup success.

"We have always had ambitions to bring the team on and going to New Zealand is no different," he said. "We hope to get as

much out of the tour as we put in and we will give a big performance down there too. I think we can win a test match their despite it being one of the most hostile rugby environments in the world."

Biarritz bemoans big screen coverage

PICTURES broadcast from Limerick during Munster's Heineken Cup victory over Biarritz lent an unfair advantage to the men in red according to the French side.

Although no official complaint was received from Biarritz, a spokesperson for the ERC confirmed that correspondence from the side referred to the fact that pictures were aired from Limerick City, but not from Biarritz where similar arrangements had been put in place.

Members of the Munster team speaking after the match said

that the images of thousands of Limerick fans had helped spur their monumental win.

Big screen coverage of home crowds was used in recent years during the Toulouse V Stade Francais final in 2005 and the 2004 London Wasps V Toulouse game without any controversy.

The images of thousands of people lining O'Connell Street were broadcast live in five continents during match coverage. "This just highlights the demand and interest in the Heineken Cup," the ERC spokesperson said.

Ryanair's fly-through check-in

ALL Ryanair passengers who travel through Shannon with a European passport will be fast-tracked through security under the new check'n'go system, which was introduced on May 22.

The system, which has been in operation around Europe since May 16 was given the go ahead following approval from the Department of Transport.

Ryanair's head of communications, Peter Sherrard said; "Passengers check in for their flight on-line from 72 hours before

departure. They print up the boarding card from their computer and bring it with them to the airport. In the airport they avoid check-in and go directly to the boarding gate. At the boarding gate they also skip queues because check'n'go passengers enjoy priority boarding."

The new system means that passengers will also receive a nine per cent reduction on fares on average according to Mr Sherrard.

Although Ryanair experienced some trouble with staff in Dublin

airport who refused to co-operate when the internet check-in system was originally introduced, there have been no problems with implementing the service in Shannon.

According to Ryanair, up to 50 per cent of customers have been using the internet check-in service since its roll out last week.

"I think anything that allows passengers to avoid queues is always going to be a winner," Mr Sherrard said.

Rampage in new car sales lot

FIVE luxury cars were battered when a man went on a rampage in a new car sales lot at the weekend. Gardai from Henry Street arrested a suspect at the scene on the Dublin Road.

15,000 flights go begging

ALTHOUGH Ryanair offered 50,000 flights after Munster's victory over Biarritz in the Heineken Cup Final, 15,000 of them remained unclaimed when the booking period finished last Thursday night.

35,000 customers availed of Ryanair's free seat giveaway. The flights, one-way outbound from Shannon, were snapped up over the three day booking period between Monday May 22 and Thursday May 25.

Although passengers bore the cost of taxes and charges on the "free" flights, Ryanair's head of communications, Peter Sherrard said that the majority of taxes on routes out of Shannon were just 4.25.

The free flight offer was advertised on the Ryanair website and in the Irish Independent.

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IRFU settles with Thomond Pk residents



The IRFU advances of IRFU chiefs to buy 12 houses located at the Ballynanty end of Thomond Park rugby grounds are nearing fruition.

RESIDENTS living in the shadow of Limerick's hallowed rugby ground Thomond Park, are expected to get more than three times the market value of their homes in a deal with the IRFU, it emerged last week. Rugby chiefs want to buy 12 houses located at the Ballynanty end of the grounds and knock them, to facilitate a stadium expansion with a capacity for 26,000 spectators.

After more than six months of negotiations

Limerick properties win awards

TWO Limerick properties were among the winners at the second annual Gulliver Ireland Tourism Accommodation Awards for 2005.

Castle View House, Ballyneety and the Railway Hotel, Limerick City, were awarded for increasing their marketing potential via the Internet at the recent ceremony.

The Gulliver Ireland Awards recognise online marketing excellence demonstrated by hotel, guesthouse, B and B and self-catering accommodation suppliers around the country through their partnership with Gulliver Ireland.

They believe that online marketing is essential to the industry's well-being and prosperity.

Headquartered in Killorglin, Co Kerry, Gulliver Ireland is the country's leading cost effective provider of tourism information and reservations.

between both sides it's now understood that some residents will get up to 450,000 euro for their homes from the IRFU.

An initial offer of 200,000 euro, was rejected by the residents last year who were then invited to submit in writing their own valuations on their

homes. These valuations formed part of a feasibility study conducted by ARUP Consulting Engineers with regard to the provision of a 26,000 capacity rugby stadium in the Limerick area.

The firm of consultant engineers was hired in October to examine the merits of

redeveloping Thomond Park as well as the possible development of three other sites. The results of the feasibility study were received by The Munster Branch, IRFU Development Committee some ten days ago, and it's understood the report favoured the option of remaining at a redevelop

oped Thomond Park Residents living in the 12 houses, known locally as 'The Banana Block' each received letters late last week confirming that the committee was now in a position to proceed with the purchase of their homes.

The residents were told in the letters, which were signed by John Hartery, chairman of Munster Branch management and Pat Whelan of the IRFU that "unanimous agreement" had been reached to sell from all of the residents. The letter further stated that rugby officials were now in a position "to finalise an agreement to sell to the MBIRFU to facilitate the development of Thomond Park".

Individual meetings were due to take place last Thursday between the residents and members of the Munster Branch Development Committee at Thomond Park.

A spokesperson for the Munster Branch said last week that no official comment would be made until after further meetings.

"We've been told that they are willing to pay us what we are looking for and we were asked in the letter to ring and make an appointment to meet with them. I think it's just a matter now of signing on the dotted line," said one resident, who did not wish to be named.

"We've been offered just under half a million," she added.

Some of the resi-

dents living in the three bedroom terraced houses on Knocklisheen Road have been residing in Ballynanty for more than 40 years.

"I've been living here for 20 years but I've lived in the Ballynanty area all my life. We have to be given some kind of moving allowance, there are old people living on this road for more than 40 years," said another resident.

Local community activist Mick "The Quill" Ryan, who has campaigned on behalf of the residents last week welcomed the news and added that he was delighted for all those concerned. Mr Ryan said he was glad that all the local speculation and stories circu-

lating that Thomond Park was set to close could finally be put to bed.

"I knew in my heart and soul it was a smoke screen all along. The residents are here for so long that they deserve everything they get and I'm absolutely delighted for them," said the Ballynanty community activist.

News that the home of Munster rugby will remain in Limerick will be warmly received by many of Limerick's die-hard rugby fans. Thomond Park is perhaps best known as the "spiritual home," of Irish rugby and it witnessed one of the greatest ever Irish sporting moments when Munster beat the All-Blacks in 1978.

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Wisdom of Thomond Park expansion questioned by former commentator

by John O'Shaughnessy

A LEADING Limerick rugby figure has questioned the wisdom of the IRFU on their multi-million euro investment at Thomond Park, plans for which

were unveiled last week.

Shannon RFC official Tommy Creamer, who recently retired after 30 years service as MC on match days at the famous venue, expects the new stadium to be filled on no

more than a handful of occasions each year.

"We are going from a 14,000 to a 26,000 stadium, principally because of the Munster success story. There are no guarantees that the province will enjoy the

same status in five to 10 years time.

"Even the most important AIL matches nowadays attract less than 2,000 paying customers, and players will tell you that leads to a lack of atmosphere. They'll be lost

A diploma in Munster

A COURSE run by Munster Rugby Club for its academy players has been awarded national validation and now has the same standing as a bachelor degree.

The Higher Education and Training Awards Council has recognised the Diploma in Professional Rugby programme as a grade seven on the National Framework of Qualifications meaning that the Academy quali-

career is a steadily growing option for a small number of elite sports people.

However, we also recognise that it is not a long term career, which is why we have worked closely with the Munster Academy to develop quality procedures that help players prepare for alternative career paths and develop rounded skills. This gives players additional career opportunities

when retiring from the game or if, for whatever reason, a professional career does not materialise or is suddenly ended."

Players in the Academy aim to become professionals with the province. Munster Rugby's elite player development programme monitors potentially suitable players from under 16 level upwards and Academy participants are recruit-

ed through a talent identification programme, an interview and a full medical and musculoskeletal examination.

On completion of the programme, players will be competent and have gained sufficient knowledge in all components of rugby - rugby technical, tactical, generic, fitness, lifestyle and psychological skills. This involves continuous assessments and monitoring progress while they are involved in the programme.

Munster chief executive Garret Fitzgerald said: "Since the advent of professionalism, there has been an increased onus not just on performances on the field but on how players behave off it. It is vital that players receive the best all-round education to develop their personal as well as their playing skills."



The new look home of the European Rugby Champions will be host to some 26,000 fans on big Munster match days, but concerns are voiced that the atmosphere at AIL matches may be lost.

Seamus Puirseil, chief executive HETAC; John Kelly, Munster Senior Player; Ciaran Murphy, chairman, HETAC and Duncan Williams of the Munster Rugby Academy at the recent signing of the HETAC recognition of the course.



fication is on the same level as a degree course.

The Academy aims to provide the Munster squad with quality rugby players and is a non-profit training institute and aims to develop the emerging talents in school rugby through its three year, part-time programme.

"The European Champions' Rugby Academy has developed a world class, holistic programme that addresses the fitness, rugby, lifestyle and psychological needs of young elite players," Séamus Puirseil, chief executive of HETAC said.

Mr Puirseil continued: "With the success of Munster, and the development of rugby generally, a professional



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most naturally attractive links between the new and old city of Limerick. At a time when our city co-ordination office and the entire City Council structure is single-mindedly placing an emphasis on the city's turnabout to the river, it is not enough to zone in on the word "development" - rather the emphasis should be on the suitability of design and its compatibility and... into which it is to be

Thomond Park plan is a winner

by Marie Hobbins

TWO curved 35 metre stands that will soon dominate the skyline over Thomond Park will testify far more eloquently than any words the unique tradition of Limerick city as the undisputed home of Irish rugby. The twin stands are included in a planning application for a major redevelopment of Thomond Park, which Pat Whelan, spokesperson for the IRFU in Limerick confirms will be lodged with City Hall before Christmas. He estimates a construction period of 18 months during which time there will be no loss of matches, including the high profile Heineken Cup matches. The Limerick Post has learned that while planning permission is being sought for a capacity of 29,000 people, the IRFU will initially build for a capacity of 26,000 of which 15,500 will be seating. They will then have the option of building for an additional capacity of 3,000 at a later stage. This week councillors, who were presented with details of the development, were unanimous in their approval of the plans. They include the retention of the existing pitch, a main entrance that faces the city entrance from Hasset's Cross, turn-stiles on the

Continued on Page 4

weather
DRIZZLY days will give way to warm, settled weather over the weekend; some cloud.

Landscape, Pottery, Still Life
THE Ogonneloe artist Bear continues exhibition in RiverRun Bistro Gallery; Horizons show open daily 12pm to 10pm. South African skies inspiration.
MILES, Men in Limerick Experiencing Separation, meets Thursdays, 8pm in Social Services Centre, Henry St. Tel. 087-2603 603.
LAST days for China Spectacular walk applica-

O'Carroll, a well known businessman, took over the unfinished works. With these two wells now dried up, and only a small number of houses having already sunk their own wells, most are this week destitute. The new developer has been supplying the milk truck full of water, aren. Hope was on the horizon as we went to press on Wednesday however as residents were told that Mr O'Carroll was bringing in a "crack team of drillers to sink a deep shaft well" and that it would be "fully operational by Thursday afternoon". But while residents

ing "heroic efforts" to solve the problem. When the water totally ran out two weeks ago, the residents started appealing to Tipperary North Riding County Council to help them out by temporarily connecting them to the mains. They argue that the mains runs only about a 100 ft from estate's system, if they were to connect Lakeview Heights to the mains system, the whole of Ballina would run dry. Local councillor, Fianna Fail's John Sheehy accepts that it is a "diabolical situation" that the families are in but he says that the Council officials

Thomond Park plan is a winner

Continued from Page 1
east side of the pitch, a corporate centre, a restaurant, bar facilities and new changing rooms, etc. Architect Hugh Murray said that the "elegant, simple structure of the arched stands will increase the sense of intimacy in the grounds". "We did not want to make the stands seem too aggressive a presence which would have been achieved with a rectangular shape," he said. He also stressed that the stands' sloping rooves and translucent material will minimise loss of light for surrounding houses at any time of day or night and that the stands will become a landmark sight for the thousands of rugby supporters making their way to the grounds from the city. Mr Whelan confirmed that the design and height of the

stands (which will cost in the region of 38 million euro) will make them unique in Ireland. He said they will become a skyline feature as distinctive as the Clarion Hotel. Declaring his delight that the "inimitable atmosphere of Thomond Park will be enhanced and not diminished in any way by the new plans", Mayor Joe Leddin said that the development is another significant boost for the city, not just from a sporting perspective but also from an economic viewpoint. He acknowledged the consultation that had taken place between the IRFU and local residents to pave the way for the development. Voicing concern expressed by a number of councillors regarding the impact of increased traffic, the Mayor urged a process of ongoing consultation between the IRFU, the

Garda Siochana and officials from Limerick City Council's Traffic Management Department to implement appropriate measures that can be put in place on big match days. Concern regarding traffic was also voiced by Cllr Kathleen Leddin and Cllr Michael Hourigan, both of whom said the development will be a great boost not just for Limerick but for the northside of the city. They were assured that the traffic and parking issue will have to be resolved. It was also stated that the IRFU would assist financially to provide additional garda supervision on big match days. Cllr Michael Hourigan was told that while initially the redevelopment grounds will be used solely for rugby, the likelihood of staging concerts at a future date has been discussed.

tion; for Down Syndrome; September 20-October 6. Contact Paul O'Connor, 73 O'Connell St.

FRIDAY 14
STREET celebration for opening of Bedford Row; live music 5pm; free BBQ from 4pm; street walkers, fire breathers. Sponsored by council and builder John Craddock.

ADDITIONS 2006 - exhibition of new portraits at the Bourn Vincent Gallery, UL's National Self-Portrait Collection of Ireland. Open weekdays.

GAMBLERS Anonymous meets 8.30pm; Mondays, Wednesdays also; Social Services Centre, Henry Street.

DEBTORS Anonymous meets weekly in Social Services Centre, 8pm. 087-912 9352.

SCRIBBLERS Writers meet Pier One, 11.30am weekly. All welcome.

SATURDAY 15
LIMERICK Walking Association meets 11.45am Davin Arms.

SUNDAY 16
Limerick Walking Association meets 11.30am at UL car park, Bus Terminus; Mondays 7.30pm, UL; Wednesdays 7.30pm O'Driscoll's, Corbally.

MONDAY 17
CENTRESTAGE Musical Theatre summer camps work on Mamma Mia and The Wizard of Oz at UCH; last week for each age group. www.centrestageireland.com

Limerick gets fourth youth diversion project

by Claire Connolly Doyle

THE St Mary's Park area is get its first Garda Youth Diversion Project following a request from local gardai. There are already three other projects in operation in the city already, one in Moyross, another in Ballynanty and a third catering for the Janesboro, Ballinacurra Weston and Southill areas.

Welcoming this week's announcement from the Department of Justice, which included announcements of nine other new projects around the country, Sgt Liam Wallace of Henry Street garda station confirmed that the projects in Limerick have always received 'great support from politicians and local community groups'.

"We made our application and luckily we were looked favourably upon this time," he told the Limerick Post. When the initiative was begun in 1998, Limerick was one of the first to receive funding.

The projects are designed to help steer young people away from crime and anti-social behaviour and can involve every sort of activity from help with homework to trips away.

According to Sgt Wallace; "Basically they're geared to improve the young people's sense of self esteem and give them a sense of pride in who they are and where they live."

Said Deputy Peter Power, who is a member of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice; "Crucially, these projects are charged with keeping crime off the streets and helping young people to reach their potential. The primary aim of the projects is to bring a change in the way young people behave."

The projects are funded by the Department of Justice and are administered by the Community Relations Section of An Garda Siochána.

There are now 74 youth diversion projects in the country with a Government intention to bring them to 100.

ARTHRITIS Ireland opens daily Drop-In support/ information centre at the pastoral care centre, Denmark St. 2.30pm to 4.45pm.

TUESDAY 18
CASTLECONNELL Folk Club meets Tues at Bradshaw's Pub, 9.30pm. All welcome.

LEONARD Graham's exhibition of paintings, Scapes, at Sean Lemass Library, Shannon.

WEDNESDAY 19
WHITE House Poetry guest at 9pm is Paddy Bushe. All welcome, finger food.

PRAYER study and prayer weekly 8pm at Mungret College LCC; 061-303022.

MONTHLY meeting of Women's Cancer Support Group 5-6.30pm at Cancer Info & Support Centre, regional hospital. 061-485163.