Moves to reopen Plassey’s black bridge

by Brian McLaughlin

THE Black Bridge – or Plassey Bridge as it is more widely known – could be open to the public again in 2014 if an estimated €250,000 is allocated for its repair at the meetingtime.

Limerick Post has learned that Limerick County Council is preparing contract documents for a private contractor to undertake a new inspection of the bridge and prepare design documents for its repair.

Two underwater surveys have already been commissioned on the pedestrian bridge which links Ballybricken to Mill Road and its 13 piles rest on a foundation of interlocking stones.

Limerick Post wrote in April that Limerick County Council had expressed concern about the bridge and that it was “in need of urgent repairs.”

The bridge is managed by Limerick National Trust and Limerick City and Clare County Councils.

If the necessary repair money is provided by the Limerick local authorities, Clare County Council and L.C.U., on top of the €70,000 available from the Arpillar Travel programme, it is hoped the repair project will be completed the year after next.

Limerick Labour Party TD and Government Minister Jan O’Sullivan who has had ongoing correspondence with Limerick County Council on the bridge issue, told Limerick Post that the recent developments were “very positive.”

“I’ve been a regular user of the bridge and have been in contact with a variety of people from random walkers and the Plassey walkers group to runners and fishermen who are all anxious to see the bridge open again,”

Her fear was that the closure was being “put on the long finger” in the hope that the public would accept the closure.

“It’s a shame to see it fenced off” she said.

Minister O’Sullivan said that as part of the Shannon navigation scheme, the bridge was part of the industrial heritage of Limerick and that she would like to see signposts installed outlining its history.

“We don’t advertise enough of the Plassey walk and the fact that Limerick City and County Clare all converge here” she said.

In 2009, Plassey was flooded and the water was almost up to the deck of the bridge. Test trucks and other debris were lodged against the arches and, as a result of safety fears, the bridge was closed.

The bridge usually stands well clear of the water but the Council was concerned that it had become weakened after the floods.

U2 scheme bringing music to Limerick schools

A 22-year-old hairdresser, with no previous convictions, has been sent to prison for stealing over €130,000 worth of cannabis for another person at her house in Reaheen last year.

Judge Carroll Moran heard that Allison Kelleher, The Grange, Reaheen, pleaded guilty to the possession of 31.524kg of cannabis in 37 small packets hidden in a wardrobe and under the bed of an upstairs room in her house.

Garda Paul Crowley said the defendant’s home was searched on foot of a search warrant on December 7, 2013. Ms Kelleher said she had the drugs in the house and cooperated with the search where the drugs with a street value of €34,000 were found along with a weight scale, bags and bowls used to break down the drugs into smaller parcels.

The court heard that Ms Kelleher, a former user, was not involved in the supply or procuring of the drugs but was under a “certain degree of duress” to keep them for someone else.

After hearing that Ms Kelleher was co-operative, of material assistance to the State and was unlikely to reoffend, Judge Moran said it would “fly in the face of legislation” not to impose a prison sentence.

He added that while it would be “unjust to impose the mandatory minimum sentence of ten years”, he had no option but to imprison her.

“Although not the most lamentable of drugs, stealing and transferring a substantial amount of cannabis is an essential part of the illicit business and therefore I will impose a sentence of two years”.

LIMERICK City Vocational Education Committee is in the process of applying for funding from Music Generation, a national music education programme part funded by U2.

The scheme aims to help children and young people access music education in their local area and is provided by local schools within a national framework.

If successful, the scheme could see €1 million pumped into providing music tuition to Limerick students over a three year period.

Speaking at this month’s VEC meeting, chief executive Paul Patton said that music had a very positive affect on the mental and physical health of children and was of great benefit in building young people’s confidence.

“There also tends to be greater participation and retention in schools where music is provided”, he said.

The committee is applying for €500,000 in funding, and if successful, they would have to provide matching funding for the remaining €500,000.

According to Mr Patton, City of Limerick VEC is hoping that local third level institutions and businesses will provide support with the matching funding.

It is hoped that the programme will be the first to be introduced in the city’s 22 CES schools in the first year, followed by the remaining preschools, primary and post primary schools in the second and third years.

Participating schools must also commit to sustaining the programme after the three year funding period has ended.