Over 200 face penalties for speeding and mobile use

By MIKE DWANE

OVER 200 motorists across Limerick city and county were given penalty points for speeding during November, with almost a quarter penalised for driving while using a mobile phone, the latest figures from the National Safety Council show. But the statistics also appear to show that drivers in Limerick city are taking their responsibilities more seriously than in other parts of the country. Since the introduction of the penalty points system six years ago, drivers in the city have accumulated fewer penalty points notices than in Waterford City, Carlow or Monaghan. Only in County Offaly, in fact, have fewer penalty points notices been issued since 2001. During November, nine notices were issued to city drivers caught using mobile phones, while six notices going to county motorists for the same offence.

For speeding notices were issued in the county and in the city last month. In total, 2,757 speeding notices were issued in the city and 729 in the county since the Government introduced the system as part of its strategy to reduce road deaths. During November, four city drivers were fined for failing to stop at traffic lights, five notices were issued to motorists in the county, while 175 were issued in the city for failing to stop at traffic lights. None of the notices were issued to city drivers caught using mobile phones, while one notice going to county motorists for the same offence.

There are now 29 offences for which points can be issued, leading to fixed charge penalties of between €60 and €1,600. In addition, five offenders were driving without insurance, careless driving, dangerous driving, using an unlight vehicle, dangerous parking and breaching duties at the scene of an accident to lead to a court appearance. For more information see www.penaltypoints.ie

Harris statue is true to life, says sculptor

By ANNIE SHERIDAN

SCULPTOR Jim Connolly has hit back at claims by two Limerick councillors that that Richard Harris is not an accurate portrayal of the late actor. In an open letter to Mayor Cllr. Donal Galvey and Limerick city council, Mr Connolly said he was asked to set the record straight, following an article which appeared in a national newspaper last week.

In the letter, Mr Connolly said his "personal and professional integrity is being torn to shreds on the fringes of a disreputable argument of the Richard Harris statue on Bedford Row.

Mr Connolly said he regards the statue as "excellent" and said it was "an opportunity lost; an opportunity that was thrown away." He added that the Harris family were consulted on an ongoing basis when Mr Connolly was commissioned by the city council to work on the statue, which cost €150,000.

Jim Connolly: Richard Harris statue, on right, "is life size" - Meanwhile, Mr Delaney said: "I think it's absolutely awful. Number one, it's too small. Richard Harris was six foot three. He should have built it higher. Harris was bigger than life. His grand-daughter said it was so broad she couldn't put her hands around him, this is what they should have had in mind. His nose is wrong - basic, simple stuff they had just gotten wrong."

The sculptor has now responded stating that he had signed a written agreement with the city council to sculpt a "life size" figure, which he believes he did.

In fact, Mr Connolly said his statue is "slightly larger than life", as he states that Harris was six foot, not six foot three as stated by Mr Delaney. He said he has been verified by Niall Harris, who said his brother's height was six feet and a half inch at most.

Mr Connolly said the statue measures six feet two inches from the soles of his boots to the top of his head and said the chest measurement of the tunic is 48 inches.

Mayor Galvey said it was "impossible to please everyone" and said it is understandable that many people have differing perspectives on the statue "given Richard Harris' colourful and varied life." He added that the Harris family were consulted on an ongoing basis when Mr Connolly was commissioned by the city council to work on the statue, which cost €150,000.

Work continues on Shannon to Heathrow air link

GOVERNMENT TDs say they have not given up on restoring the link between Shannon Airport and Heathrow despite Transport Minister Noel Dempsey's assertion that the CityJet service to Paris Charles de Gaulle announced last week will exceed Heathrow in terms of connecting flights on to global destinations and markets.

"Over the past few months the business community in the Mid-West has worked hard and assembled their customers with region to create a business case for a key destination. We have come to the conclusion that CityJet and Aer Lingus are not moving ahead with this project but exiting it by giving them a business-quality service and access to over 600 destinations throughout the world," said Dempsey.

Dempsey's Cabinet colleague Willie O'Dea said "it's not as important a project as Shannon." The Government is working on a number of other exciting initiatives and developments which I am hoping will bear fruit in the coming weeks and months which will be of good news to Shannon Airport," Deputy Power said.

News that CityJet will start its Paris service within a month of Aer Lingus' last flight to Heathrow has certainly come as an early Christmas present for Government TDs who have been under pressure since the former State airline's shock announcement was made in August. Businesses in Limerick/Shannon have been reacting positively.

Cook Ireland managing director Bill Doherty, who forms part of the Airline Network Action Alliance, anticipates the business community here will give the new route its full support. "This is excellent news for businesses across the West of Ireland as we are now guaranteed restoratiun of connectivity to key international markets despite the loss of Heathrow services in January," Mr Doherty said. A joint statement from the Chambers of Commerce in Limerick, Shannon and Ennis identifies the new service as business a huge trade boost.

"We view this as a very positive step in the right direction while looking forward to further such announcements in the same future," they state. The new service commences on February 4, 2008.