

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 more than 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 driv-

ers 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 point notices than in Waterford City, Cavan or Monaghan. Only in County Leitrim, in fact, have fewer penalty point notices been issued since 2001.

During November, nine

notices were issued to city drivers caught using mobile phones; with 46 notices going to county motorists for the same offence.

For speeding, 172 notices were issued in the county and 32 in the city last month. In total, 2,757 speeding notices have been issued in the city and 9,969 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, with five notices issued to motorists in the county for the same offence. Fifteen drivers in the county were penalised for not wearing a seatbelt while notices were sent to two city motorists who failed to belt up last month.

Overall, the statistics show there is a relatively

high level of compliance with the penalty points regime in Limerick city.

In the past six years, only two notices have been issued to city motorists caught driving on the hard shoulder of a dual carriageway; only one for failing to stop for a garda; five for failing to drive on the left; 22 for overtaking offences and none for either careless driving or driving on the footpath.

There are now 36 offences for which points can be issued, leading to fixed charge penalties of between €60 and €120. In addition, five offences - driving without insurance, careless driving, driving an unfit vehicle, dangerous parking and breaching duties at the scene of an accident - lead to a court appearance.

For more information see www.penaltypoints.ie

Harris statue is true to life says sculptor

By ANNE SHERIDAN

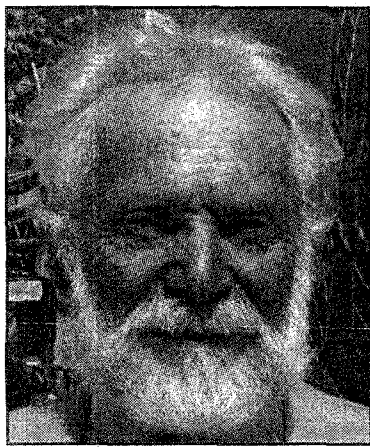
SCULPTOR Jim Connolly has hit back at claims by two Limerick artists that his statue of Richard Harris is not an accurate portrayal of the late actor.

In an open letter to Mayor Ger Fahy and Limerick city councillors this Monday, Mr Connolly said he wished 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 were torn to shreds on the alleged statement of some members of the literary and artistic community in the city."

At a recent book launch of poetry by Mark Whelan, artist John Shinnors and Thomas Delohery both aired their dislike of the Richard Harris statue on Bedford Row.

Mr Shinnors said he regarded the statue as "touristy kitsch" and said it was "an opportunity lost; an opportunity that was thrown away."



Jim Connolly: Richard Harris statue, on right, 'is life size'

Meanwhile, Mr Delohery said: "I think it's absolutely awful. Number one, it's too small - Richard Harris was six foot three. They should have built it higher. Harris was bigger than life. His grand-daughter said he 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 should have gotten right."

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

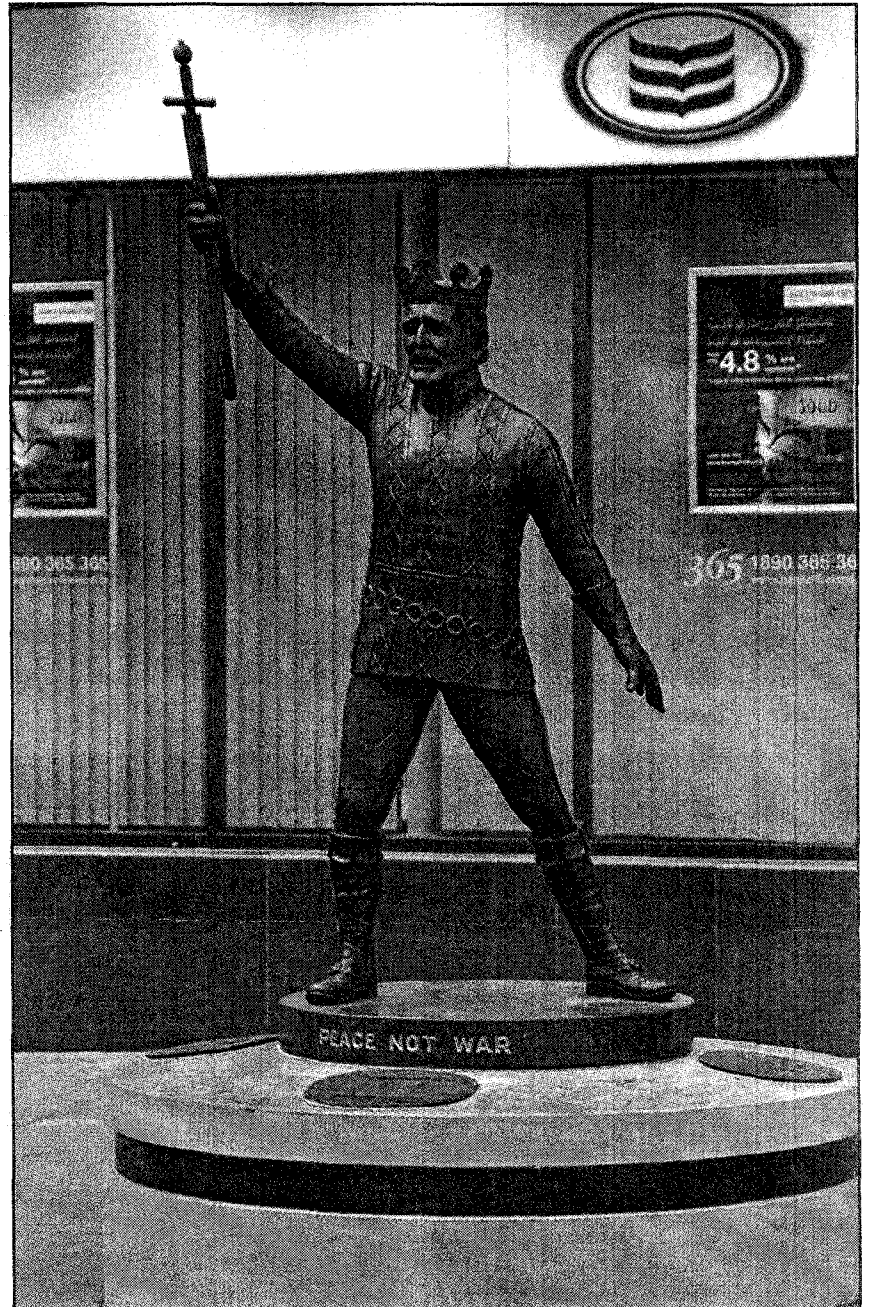
In fact, Mr Connolly said his statue is "slightly larger than life", as he states that Harris was six foot, not six foot three as stated by Mr Delohery.

He said this has been verified by Noel 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 Fahy said "it's 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 surpasses 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 sought to have a new service in place that will provide them and their customers with connectivity to and from key destinations throughout the world. I believe that CityJet and Air France are not only meeting that require-



Pat Shanahan, (right) Chairman, Shannon Airport Authority, at the CityJet announcement with from left; Martin Moroney Director, Shannon Airport, Geoffrey O'Byrne-White, CityJet's CEO and Minister Noel Dempsey

ment but exceeding it by giving them a business-quality service and access to over 800 desti-

nations throughout the world," Minister Dempsey said. But

Minister Dempsey's Cabinet colleague Willie O'Dea said there were still "important and necessary nego-

tiations being undertaken to maintain connectivity with Heathrow and with a view also to establishing links with Amsterdam and Frankfurt and I am confident progress will be made".

Minister O'Dea pledged to keep "working behind the scenes to ensure connectivity with Heathrow".

His Fianna Fail colleague, Deputy Peter Power said: "While the loss of the Shannon/Heathrow service is extremely disappointing - and needs to be replaced - this new service will go some way towards providing increased connectivity for the business community from Shannon."

"The Government is working on a number of

other exciting initiatives and developments which I am hopeful 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 Atlantic Connectivity Alliance, anticipates the

business community here will give the new route its full support.

"This is excellent news for business across the West of Ireland as we are now guaranteed restoration 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-friendly.

"We view this as a very positive step in the right direction while looking forward to further such announcements in the near future," they state.

The new service commences on February 4, 2008.