

Taggart angers LCGOBA at €15m stadium launch

By John O'Shaughnessy

BORD na gCon chairman Pascal Taggart, embroiled in controversy following the sudden dismissal of CEO Aidan Tynan, this week



Cllr Paddy McAuliffe of Kilmallock at the launch.

angered members of the Limerick and Clare

President acknowledges young Limerick citizens

AN acknowledgement of the role young Limerick people aged between 12 and 25 play in active citizenship projects in their area, is the Young Citizens Award which was unveiled by President of Ireland, Mary McAleese as part of last year's European Year of Citizenship Through Education. On Thursday, February 16 County Hall, Dooradoyle is the venue for the awards ceremony which is organised by the Limerick County Development Board. "The scheme is aimed at young people aged between 12 and 25 who are involved in active citizenship projects, such as environmental work, caring for people with special needs or assisting in their local communities," explains Anthony Coleman of the County Development Board.

"In December 2005 we received 23 successful applications under the awards scheme from throughout the county. Six applications involved groups such as youth clubs and there were 17 individual applications. The young people's involvement in their communities varied from organising youth sports in the community, helping to look after children with disabilities, supporting older people and providing aid for people in developing countries," he added. Stressing that it is obvious from the applications that the young people took pride in creating a better environment in communities both locally and globally, Mr Coleman said the young people involved were willing to give freely of their time and efforts to a variety of activities and projects.

The scheme is organised in conjunction with Citizenship 2005, the Department of Education and Science, Development Co-Operation Ireland and Co-operation Ireland and is supported by Limerick County Development Board.

The importance of giving recognition to the work of young people who are actively contributing to make Ireland a more thriving civic society, is according to Brigid Teefy, cathaoirleach of Limerick County Development Board an encouragement to them to reflect on what they have gained from active citizenship. A certificate signed by President McAleese will be presented to the successful applicants in County Hall on Thursday evening. The applicants have also been entered into a lottery to randomly select individuals and groups for attendance at a special event in Aras an Uachtarán in March.

Greyhound Owners and Breeders Association at the launch of the proposed 15m euro stadium, near Coonagh Cross, on the Limerick/Clare border.

Mr Taggart, who opened proceedings with a defence of the Bord's decision to remove Mr Tynan, and who then screened the almost five minute sequence culled by RTE of his recent meeting with greyhound owners at Shelbourne Park, insinuated that the LCGOBA had held up plans for Limerick when they refused to accept the Bord's recommendation for the redevelopment of the Markets Field.

In thanking Ald Pat Kennedy and Richard Crehan for having researched the deeds of the Markets Field, Mr Taggart said that he had favoured the redevelopment of the



At the announcement by the Irish Greyhound Board of plans for a new 18 million euro greyhound stadium for Limerick were: Pascal Taggart, chairman IGB; Gus Ryan, racing manager, Limerick Stadium and Tony McKenna, chairman Limerick Stadium.

Mulgrave Street venue. The LCGOBA, he claimed, did not like the plan, so the Bord then investigated the old racecourse at Greenpark and found that location unsuitable.

"Nothing I ever did slowed up Limerick there was a split in the LCGOBA and plans for the Markets Field had to be ditched".

Eamonn Cronin, chairman of the LCGOBA, held his fire to the end of the meeting and in an angry voice, said that Mr Taggart's opening remarks about the

Markets Field were inappropriate and an insult to those who had worked so hard to provide a new stadium for Limerick, including the Bord's former CEO Michael Field.

"Pascal, you tried to lock us into the Markets Field. There were problems there, especially in the area of car parking. There were three cars stolen from outside the Markets Field two weeks ago, and another last weekend".

Mr Cronin said that their members favoured a move to a

green field site and that the current headquarters was a non-runner for major investment.

Mr Taggart also expressed his concern at what he described as the unmerciful publicity aimed at him, especially by RTE.

"I have taken them on and tomorrow (Tuesday) will be issuing legal proceedings against them and a national newspaper.

"I have never bowed to bullies. My integrity and that of the board, is very important," said the speaker.

Limerick, he promised, would have the best greyhound stadium in the world in 2008.

Planning permission is to be sought from the Limerick and Clare County Councils within a matter of months, and the contractors were expected to be on site in January 2007.

Work, he continued, would be completed within 14 months, and March 2008 was the date earmarked for opening of the stadium.

Accommodation will be provided at the venue for 3,000 patrons, with 297 car parking spaces. State of the-art facilities are

to be provided for patrons.

When questioned if accommodation for 3,000 would be sufficient, it was explained that Saturday racing at Curraheen in Cork attracted an average of 1,100 patrons, and 1,000 on other race nights. It was a similar story at Shelbourne Park.

While appreciative that at last something was being done to give Limerick its long awaited new track, not all in the Castletroy Park hotel meeting room accepted a March 2008 opening date, citing possible delays in the granting of planning permission.

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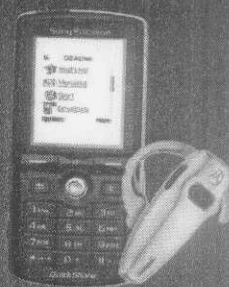
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