

€20m dog track plan comes out of the traps

By JOHN HOGAN

LIMERICK is set to have yet another top class sports venue after Bord na gCon announced plans to build a "five-star" €20m stadium on the site of the old Greenpark Racecourse on Dock Road.

The planning application process will begin immediately for the new stadium, which, it is hoped, will be completed by 2010.

This is the board's second attempt at constructing a new track in Greenpark.

In 2002, plans for a £10m stadium were scuppered because of fears that infrastructure in the area wouldn't support such a development.

Bord na gCon feel no such problems will be experienced this time round after developments in the area over the last five years, including a new sewerage system in Bunlicky and the Limerick Tunnel which is due to be completed in 2010.

In 2006, a new development was announced on Ennis Road, but once again, there were problems with the location and access to the proposed site.

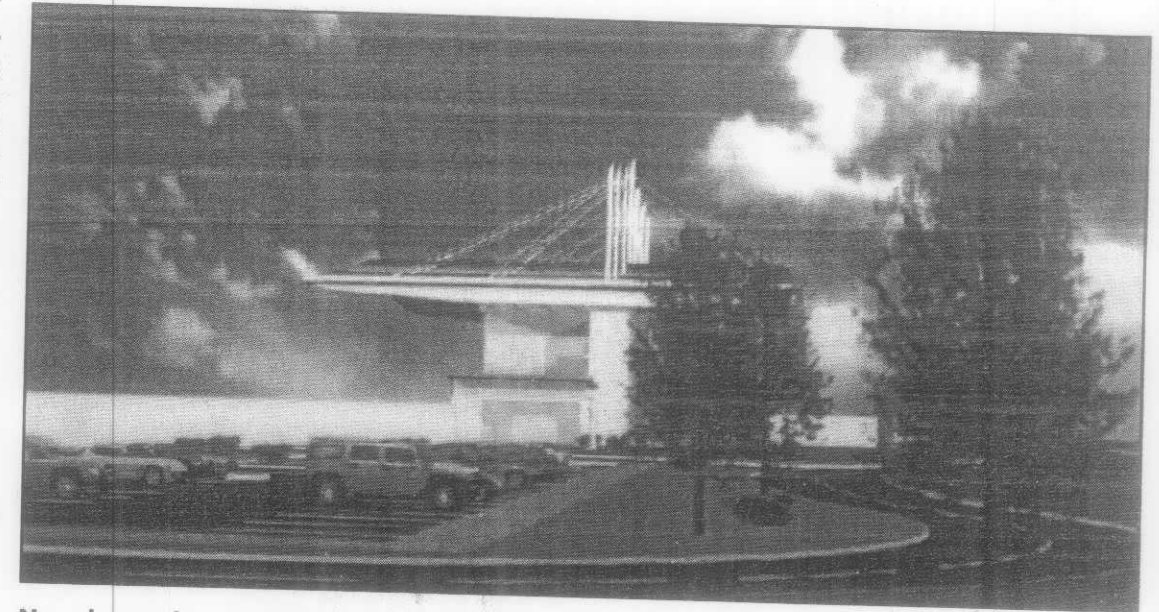
The decision to abandon the Ennis Road site has angered Clare county councillor Cíhal Crowe, who said he was "bitterly disappointed" by the announcement.

Speaking at the launch of the plan, the chairman of the Irish Greyhound Board, Dick O'Sullivan, acknowledged the previous "false dawns" with the project.

"I realise this is the third time we've had this press conference," he said, "but they say third time lucky and I'm confident it will go through this time."

He added that the new track will be the "five-star facility that Limerick people deserve", and would rival Shelbourne Greyhound Stadium in Dublin as the premium national venue for greyhound racing.

The stadium will boast a two-storey high television screen, a restaurant, bars on the ground floor and an indoor gallery, and



New dog track: an artist's drawing of the proposed €20m greyhound track at Greenpark

parking for "at least" 450 vehicles.

Mr O'Sullivan thanked Mark McMahon, chairman of Limerick Race Company, who, he admitted, had been shy to commit to the project initially after being "bitten" at the last attempt to construct a stadium in Greenpark.

Mayor Ger Fahy said that the announcement was another "great sporting occasion for the city of Limerick."

He also assured the members of Bord na gCon present that the new stadium would do booming business once it was opened.

"We in Limerick pride ourselves on being the sporting capital of the country, so you can be sure of receiving our support once you're up and running."

Minister for Defence Willie O'Dea also emphasised that a sporting county such as Limerick should have a proud stadium in which to host greyhound racing.

"This is what the sporting fraternity in Limerick deserve," said the Minister. "This has been a long battle and people were wondering if the new stadium would ever arrive but at last we've got there."

The Minister also pledged to help Bord na gCon and Limerick City Council "in any way" he could to secure the planning permission required to build the new stadium.

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