

New greyhound stadium very much on track

By John O'Shaughnessy

Will be of immense benefit to local economy

LIMERICK'S new state-of-the-art greyhound stadium remains on course for a grand opening later this year....and further good news is there has been significant interest in naming rights.

Adrian Neilan, CEO, Bord na gCon, promises that the Greenpark venue will be a flagship for the sport throughout the south west and, in terms of confidence, on a national level.

On the naming rights issue, Mr Neilan said they were looking to a strong brand that will be appropriate for the development, and which will gain enormously from association with the Stadium.

The Markets Field was, for decades, recognised as the real home of the greyhound industry in the south, but with the advent of upgraded stadia in Tralee, Cork and Waterford, it fell behind in the pecking order with owners, trainers and supporters.

In the words of one national administrator, Greenpark has the advantage now in that it will be taken a stage higher in the facilities it has to offer to patrons.

The new Limerick Tunnel will provide easy access to the venue from the west of Ireland, and



Adrian Neilan, CEO Bord na gCon

also from east and south Limerick.

The Bord is still seeking a buyer for its Henry Street offices, with staff there to relocate to Greenpark.

Not surprisingly, attendances and financial figures nationwide showed a decline in 2009, with the annual surplus dropping from €5 million to €1 million.

However, Bord na gCon has expressed confidence that the worst of the decline may be over.

And with new-look Limerick coming on track, the benefits should be reaped locally.

The reduction in the surplus from a 2008 high of €5 million is down largely to the reduction in the Horse and Greyhound Racing Fund by €1.6 million and

redundancy costs associated with restructuring of the Board's operations at a cost of €1.4 million. Profits drawn from the commercial operations of the Irish Greyhound Board have also been hit by the substantial reduction in consumer spending which has been felt throughout the economy.

Attendance figures at the sport throughout the year were down by 21 per cent, though the fall in numbers stabilised during the year and restaurant bookings actually increased in August and October.

"This has been a difficult past 12 months across every sector of Irish society and our industry has borne the brunt of the general reduction in consumer spending," commented Mr Neilan.

"During 2009, the Irish Greyhound Board has absorbed over €2 million in cost savings through staff redundancy and a deep seated review of process and efficiency. This was a painful process but necessary for the future security of the industry. This is an area that we will continue to pursue in 2010 to ensure we are as efficient as possible whilst allowing this industry to progress.

"We have faith that the sport will survive as it has done through a century and more. Ours is an industry that is rooted in the fabric of rural Ireland. We face great challenges but we will meet them with purpose and conviction and deliver a strong future for the people involved at every level".

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Bothar has expressed concern that since the turn of the year there has been a



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