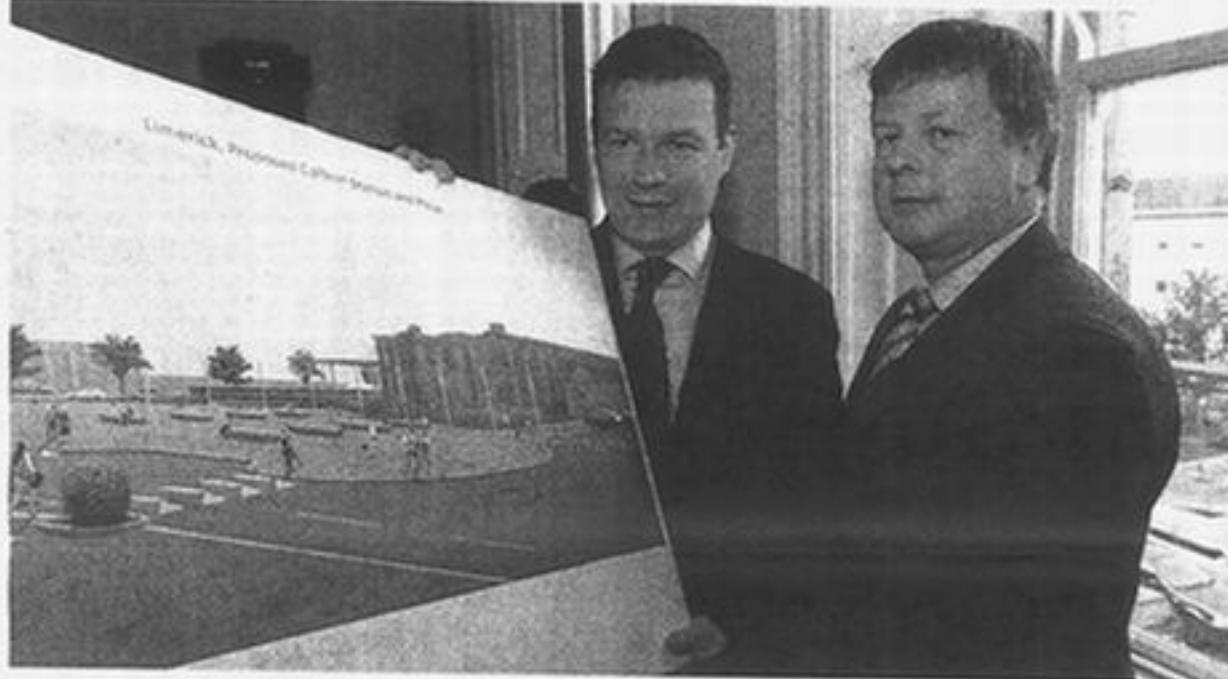


€17m plans for station may take up to 10 years

■ Long-awaited plans set to 'transform' gateway to Limerick city



Public Transport Minister Alan Kelly with Jim Meade, director of Irish Rail, at the launch of the €16.8m plans at Colbert Station, which will be rolled out in four phases over the next eight to 10 years

Picture: Liam Burke / Press22

ANNE SHERIDAN

LONG-AWAITED plans for a major redevelopment of Colbert Station have been described as "transformational" by the city and county manager.

The €16.8m plans, which could take 10 years to roll out subject to planning permission, are expected to create 100 jobs in the city during the construction phase.

Minister of State for Public Transport Alan Kelly has unveiled the plans set to modernise the gateway into Limerick city for tourists and locals alike, including proposals for a €3.5m pedestrian plaza.

"This is something I've been determined to do since I became minister for transport. It's a station and an area I know very well, and used it a lot in my youth. I believe it needs a complete refurbishment, needs to be modernised and integrate with the plans for Limerick," he told the Limerick Leader.

The proposal for Colbert Station consists of four elements: the development of the Colbert plaza at the front of the building; the proposed bus station, which will move to the opposite side of the station; alterations and

renovations to the train station, and future overhead and basement developments for commercial use.

He said consideration will have to be given to the fact that this is a working station, and the first phase of the plans - developing the plaza, new drop off point and taxi rank will take two years to develop.

City and county manager Conn Murray said the plans are part of a wider project, under Limerick 2020, "to guide the economic, social and physical renaissance of Limerick city and the wider Mid-West region."

Mr Murray said major investment is needed for this "vibrant, busy street and bring it back to life".

"For many visitors, Colbert Station is the 'shop window' for Limerick and this major development will enable it to be a real centerpiece for the city greatly enhancing the user and visitor experience," he said.

"This is a significant investment in Colbert Station, which is a key access point into Limerick and its re-development will greatly enhance this city centre location while also incorporating a hub for all public transport serving Limerick and its hinterland. This expansion will provide a new civic space for Limerick while the proposed works

will enhance the original station while maintaining its character as a protected structure," he said.

He said the proposed bus and train station integration will provide a single area concourse so that ticket sales, retail, waiting areas and facilities are shared between bus and rail users.

"Limerick is already a leader in Smarter Travel which encourage the use of public transport, cycling and walking rather than the car, particularly for commuting journeys," Mr Murray continued. "While accommodating taxi, set down spaces and additional car parking, the proposal provides for over 250 spaces for bicycle parking for both the Limerick Bike Scheme which is due to start later this summer and private bicycles."

The train station's existing toilet block will be demolished to make way for a new bus station, with the current bus station being converted into the access area for a new 125-space car park. The project will also see a significant refurbishment of the interior of the station with new finishes throughout and provision of a new ticketing office and retail units.

Minister Kelly said the project would give the station and the city a huge boost.

"The station is in need of investment and the creation of a pedestrian plaza at the front of the station facing the city-centre will provide a new civic space for the people of Limerick while dramatically improving the aesthetics of the area.

"I can see it becoming a real focal point of the city in time. The plaza is the centrepiece of the works and will open up the station to the entire city," he said.

The plans were prepared by Irish Rail in collaboration with Bus Éireann, Limerick City and County Council, and the National Transport Authority.

Colbert station sees about 2,500 rail passengers a day serving four rail routes, while Bus Éireann services about one million passengers a year with 225 buses departing each day. The proposals will be submitted for planning in the coming months and will be funded through the Regional Cities programme.

Built in 1849 and designed by Sancton Wood, also architect of Dublin's Heuston Station, the station was renamed after Con Colbert, the Limerick man executed following the 1916 Rising.

Man who abused boy seeks Probation Act

CONOR GALLAGHER

A JUDGE has been asked to consider applying the Probation Act in the case of a Limerick man who sexually abused a young boy 21 years ago.

The accused, who was 16 at the time, is now married and living in America and the Central Criminal Court has heard that any conviction could prevent him returning there.

If the Probation Act is applied, a conviction will not be recorded allowing the accused man to retain a clean criminal record.

The now 37 year old pleaded guilty to attempted rape on the basis of full details of the offending being heard by the court.

The abuse occurred during the summer of 1993 in a wooded area near the man's home.

His victim was six and seven at the time. Maurice C. prosecuting, said the accused still suffers nightmares as a result of the abuse.

"He has irreparable damage to him in a vicious statement adding that the accused was manipulating, and most of all,

A local garda court the accused when the accused pornographic photo in the woods. Then put his child's genitalia to run away.

On another occasion accused begged into the woods he had laid down molested him sexually rape him.

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EYE HEALTH

Those affected by sight loss or learning more about how to care for your eyes and health are invited to attend:

FREE - Eye Health

Limerick Street
Thursday, 15 May

Miss Marie Hickey-Dwyer, Consultant Ophthalmologist, Limerick will be joined by a panel of experts.

HOW TO LOOK AFTER YOUR EYES - you and your family and the most common eye conditions in Ireland, including:

- AMD
- Diabetic Retinopathy
- Glaucoma
- Cataracts
- Paediatric eye conditions

Representatives from partner organisations will be present:

NCBI
Working for People with Sight Loss

FIGHTING BLINDNESS
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Places are FREE and open to all
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For further information on this