

Taoiseach confident on Shannon Estuary

Shannon
Estuary
file

By NORMA
PRENDIVILLE

THE Shannon Estuary will be one of the major flagship projects for the next round of EC Structural and Cohesion Funds, according to the Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds, who has however declined to spell out the specifics of what is being proposed.

"We are at a relatively early stage of strategic planning," he said in reply to a Dail question, "but I am confident that this will result in specific project proposals in the relatively near future."

But Fine Gael Deputy Michael Finucane has questioned whether the Taoiseach's proposals are simply one more "in a long line of broken promises" regarding the Estuary.

"A lot of people are cynical about this latest proposal," he said, "and are wondering whether there isn't a certain amount of electioneering in what is going on. When are we going to see something positive?", he

asked.

Upgrading of the infrastructure, particularly of the N69 Coast Road, was long overdue, Deputy Finucane added. If this work were undertaken, then the industrial projects which were so badly needed, would follow, he argued.

His colleague, Deputy Jimmy Deenihan from North Kerry, also had reservations about any immediate outcome to the Taoiseach's proposals. "I hope this is not just another fairy tale," he told the *Limerick Leader*. "The Shannon Estuary has been described in one report as a sleeping beauty ready to get the kiss of life. Perhaps Albert Reynolds will be the prince who gives that kiss."

Con Power, the Taoiseach's Special Economic Development Officer and the man responsible for co-ordinating the proposed project, met Kerry County Council this week.

But according to Deputy Deenihan, Mr Power also was short on specifics.

Neither did he respond in

great depth to the Council's £109million plan to develop the 600 acre land bank site in Ballylongford and to upgrade the road system to and from the Tarbert/Ballylongford area, from Tralee

to Limerick.

"We feel the infrastructure should be put in place," said Deputy Deenihan who believes that the site at Ballylongford should be developed as a major port.

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*Kazakhstan head meets Daly over estuary plan

ONE of the more interesting points raised during the hour-long discussion between President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan and the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Brendan Daly, was the Government's proposal for the development of the Shannon Estuary.

Kazakhstan, the second largest of the new Commonwealth of Independent States, with an area spread well over a million square miles and rich in mineral, agriculture and oil, could be a major user if the estuary is developed as a transshipment port.

President Nazarbayev, was according to Mr. Daly, quite enthusiastic about the prospect.

Apart from the estuary project, President Nazarbayev, who had been to Shannon last May when he had talks with Minister of State for Justice, Willie O'Dea, also expressed an interest in a plan to develop a number of trade links with this country.

Once the state from which the Soviet aerospace projects were launched close to the borders of China, its capital, Alma-Ata, has the largest hub airport in the world and naturally the development of new air routes through Shannon was covered in the talks.

Later, Mr. Daly told me that their discussions had been wideranging and interesting.

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