

## IN BRIEF

## Museum grants

■ THE Limerick Museum, the Hunt Museum and Foynes Flying Boat Museum will all benefit from grants announced last week by Arts Minister Jimmy Deenihan. The Limerick Museum will get €4,000 for an interactive display on lace, Foynes is getting more than €6,000 to rebuild a B315 airplane and the Hunt will be improving its displays with a grant of €7,000. Twenty-six projects have been awarded funding on a matched funding basis on foot of an assessment process carried out by the Department in conjunction with the Heritage Council of Ireland.

## Save the post

■ CALLS have been made on the Government to protect Ireland's rural post offices with Labour Party European Election candidate Phil Prendergast calling on the Government and An Post to find a solution. Ms Prendergast was speaking on the campaign trail in a week where the Irish Postmasters Union (IPU) president Ciaran McEntee expressed his disappointment at the establishment of 'Post Point' outlets in supermarkets. "The removal of post offices from towns and villages in Limerick is a move, in my opinion, that will tear at the fabric of communities in each community around the country," she said.

## Net health

■ IS social media good for your health? That's just one of the questions to be addressed at the Psychology Public Event at 7.30 pm on Tuesday May 27 at Mary Immaculate College. The Department of Psychology is inviting members of the public to this free event with Dr Kerry Greer, Head of Psychology at MIC addressing the issue 'Self, Sexes and Sanity: Is the Social Net good for your health?'. Prof Orla Muldoon of UL will deliver her talk on 'A tale of two cities? Disadvantage, social division and wellbeing in Limerick'. Members of the Department of Psychology will be on hand at the interactive information stands both before and after the talks.

## Playground scandal

■ LABOUR Party city councillor Joe Leddin has castigated what he sees as "the failure of previous Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael controlled County Councils to deliver any essential recreational amenities for the people of Raheen and Dooradoyle". He said it is an "absolute scandal" that not a single playground has been delivered throughout the entire area. According to the City West councillor, those fortunate to be elected onto the new Limerick Council must move immediately to ensure that the 200-acre site at Mungret College is properly developed to facilitate both recreational and educational use.

## Broadband promises

■ FIANNA Fáil local election candidate for Newcastle West, Séamus Ahern, has criticised the Government for excluding many Limerick towns from their new broadband initiative. Mr Ahern is now calling on the Government to make good on its promise to deliver high speed internet nationwide. "It was promised that many parts of rural Ireland would have high speed broadband by 2012. This has not been delivered and is impacting on companies across Limerick and their ability to do business. If you go to any home or business in Glin, Athesa or Ardagh they will tell you of the very poor broadband service," he claimed.

## CULTURE

## Plain sailing for gandelows in the land of the gondolas

by Bernie English  
bernie@limerickpost.ie

AS the traditional boat of the Shannon Estuary, there was a time that the only place you could see a gandelow was on the waterways of Limerick.

But now the gandelows have helped showcase the skills of a very special school of Limerick boatbuilders on the world-famous waterways of Venice.

A team from the Limerick-based Ilen school and network for wooden boat building were given a warm welcome when they arrived with their gandelows for a series of races

in the home of the gondola.

Having trained the crews on Canal Grande and Bacino di San Marco in the Venetian Lagoon, the main race was held on a six-mile course out from the main island to Burano last week.

"Wherever the Limerick racing crews went, they won great admiration for their seamanship and their fleet of four beautiful Gandelows, which have been built at the Ilen School in Roxboro over the last four months," said Ilen school instructor Gary McMahon.

"This welcome, as if for a

long-lost boat, was found everywhere the Limerick gandelow fleet went. People stopped on the canal sides to offer their precious moorings and to admire this fine expression of culture," he added.

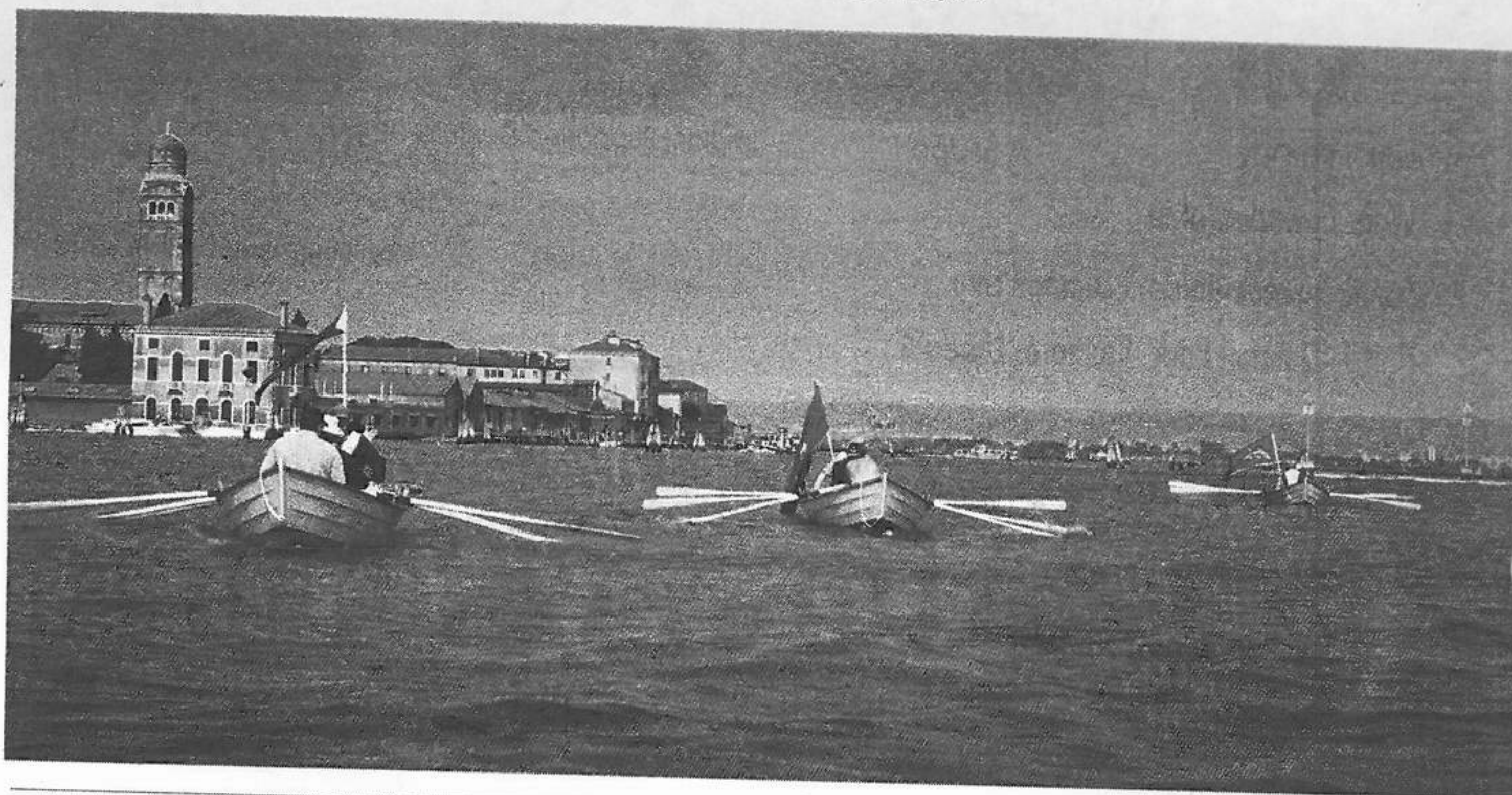
The visit was led by Mayor of Limerick Kathleen Leddin, who was formally welcomed to the international boating event at a special reception in the Palace of the Commune.

There are already plans being discussed with the Venetian master of ceremonies to arrange another visit by the Ilen School to Venice later in the year.

6699

This welcome, as if for a long-lost boat, was found everywhere the Limerick gandelow fleet went.

GARY MCMAHON



## SOCIETY

## Moves to cut down on social welfare fraud

by Andrew Carey  
andrew@limerickpost.ie

A NUMBER of employees from the Department of Social and Family Protection have been suspended as part of an investigation into social welfare fraud involving the misappropriation of €1.2 million.

Limerick Fine Gael TD Kieran O'Donnell, who is vice-chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, said he found it incredible that the fraud went undetected for six years.

Deputy O'Donnell, who raised the issue at last week's Public Accounts Committee hearings, said the community welfare officer system was a vital service for those in need of emergency assistance and it was shocking that this was allowed to happen. As the committee heard that two employees of the department

had been suspended, a District Court judge in Limerick was jailing a man for 12 months for defrauding the State of €14,000 in false social welfare claims.

Last week's revelations in both Dublin and Limerick highlight the extent of social welfare fraud with 1.5 million people receiving some form of social welfare payment from the Department of Social and Family Protection's €20.2 billion budget.

Last year, €632 million was saved after the department carried out reviews of claimants and their circumstances.

At the end of last year, €127 million in payments was linked to fraud and error but the alleged misappropriation of funds now under investigation was unearthed as a result of new internal anti-fraud controls.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

## Riverside pathway to bring walkers to city

by Brian McLaughlin  
news@limerickpost.ie

LIMERICK City Council is seeking planning permission for the construction of a riverside path from the University of Limerick boathouse to the Guinness Bridge in the city centre.

The application to An Bord Pleanála, which is supported by Limerick County Council and Limerick Smarter Travel, is for a three-metre wide shared walking and cycleway along the bank of the river Shannon.

The 1.25 kilometers of raised boardwalk will include three new footbridges along the route and widening of a fourth. There will also be public lighting, CCTV, balustrades and signage along the route.

No details of the cost of the project have been released.

The development has been the subject of an Appropriate Assessment in accordance with the EU Habitats Directive and the Planning and Development Acts.

Pat O'Neill, Senior Engineer with Limerick Smarter Travel, says that the planning board may approve the application with or without conditions or may refuse the application for development.

Submissions or observations can be made in writing to An Bord Pleanála between May 2 and June 18. No fee is required and a person can question the validity of the Board's decision by applying for a judicial review.

Plans for the development are available at Limerick Smarter Travel Office, Limerick City and County Planning Department and Limerick City and County Council Travel and Transportation Department.