

# Let Longford be the Leader

Having been away for a weekend in Kerry I happened to notice a sign as I walked into the town of Dingle that made me stop and think that it should be the policy we should adopt as a county. Longford has been hit hard, like everywhere else, with the downturn in the economy. We have being the county most highlighted by the television, radio, print and electronic media – with negative reporting regarding of ‘ghost estates’ and unfinished buildings throughout the county.

For some time now I have been enthusing, needless to say without any success, the benefits of Lanesboro and I know others have been promoting their own particular towns and areas throughout the county, unfortunately, with the same disappointing result. This lack of success led me to believe that we as a county should put a concerted effort into promoting our own county rather than our areas individually.

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) shows that the population of the county in the latest census stands at 34,391. In October of this year there were 5281 persons on the live register that is 15.35% of our county population. It becomes more dramatic when you take out the 0 to 14 year olds and 60 to 85+ in the CSO figures which equates to 12,227 in the census and leaves us with 23.8% of our county on the live register.

The sign advertising ‘workingdingle.ie’ website is an example as to the direction we should be directing our energies as a county. Every group and agency working in promoting County Longford should come together to produce a plan to encourage and attract major business and industry into the county. Recently the business community of Dingle along with Údarás na Gaeltachta have come together to promote and develop business and work in the Dingle Peninsula and from what I believe it has received a great response and created a tremendous amount of interest in the area. We too must use every available agency, Government and otherwise, to promote, develop and attract to Longford. When one thinks of the massive success that Navan had with its slogan ‘only an hour from Dublin’ some years ago, we as a county should strive to formulate the same impact as Navan, now that we too are now only the one hour drive from Dublin and have the infrastructure, the qualified and educated workforce to create a huge drive in the promotion of our Longford county as a whole. This body should be non political with the only criteria for involvement be that everybody involved be prepared to work to find and develop business/industry in our county. I am sure we can create the right environment and by doing so we would be in a position to put a major dent in that 5281 even in the trying times we find ourselves in. We maybe in the dark tunnel at present but we must together hasten our journey to the light at the end. We can be the forefront and leaders of the revival and our size can ensure that we are, but it

will only happen if we have the desire and spirit to make it happen.

This is a case of those with allegiances to political parties to take off their party hats and come together to work together with one goal and that is the development of Longford. We should create a futuristic revolutionary plan and put it in place together with all the local agencies, County Longford Enterprise Board, IDA, Enterprise Ireland and every single one of the Government agencies ensuring that Longford County will be first and foremost in the minds of industrialists and businessmen seeking to invest in Ireland. We should leave no stone unturned in the promotion of our county as a whole. We have brilliant, educated and skilled people and their expertise must be harnessed to create the wonderful county we need and deserve. It will not be achieved without our own extreme efforts. We cannot wait for any Government party, now or into the future, we have to be the creative, demanding and proactive leaders of our own destiny. It is in our own hands only.

We should concentrate on the positives of our great county; we must seek to create a change from the negative to a positive profile from the national media towards our county. We must drive forward as a county with a pride and radical development that will put everywhere else in the background. All those concerned and the agencies interested in developing and promoting Longford County as a whole entity must ensure the actions taken are decisive, unique and sustainable. It should make a stand for our people and our county. Without doubt, we have the learned people to make this happen and we should make certain that this will happen for those 5281 presently without work, those whose work is in jeopardy and to ensure that the young people of Longford will have an exciting future full of vibrancy and pride, certain in the knowledge that the future of County Longford is secure well into the future. Secure in the knowledge that our young people can and will work in their own county and we are no longer rearing our children to go from the county to find jobs elsewhere.

We must learn from the past and drive forward to a new and exciting future in Longford County.

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