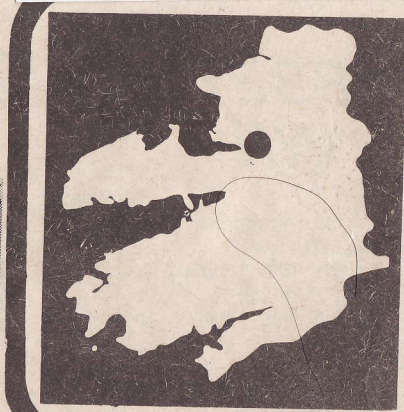


NOVEMBER 4th, 1978

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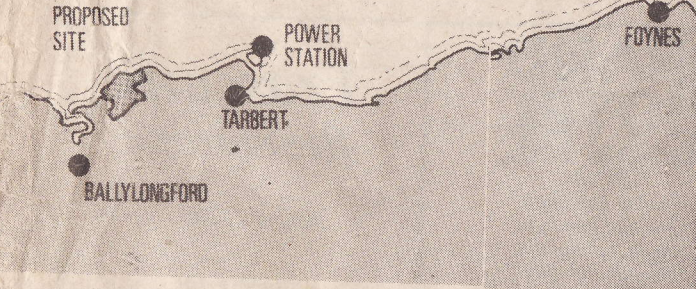


KERRY'S

EYE

**TRALEE
EDITION**

Tralee's own Weekly Newspaper. Price 12p



SMELTER PROJECT is All Tit - and No Tat

by
Padraig
Kennelly

On Thursday the 14th...

On Thursday, the IDA finally announced the siting of the Irish Zinc Smelter. It is to be located about 4 miles north of Ballylongford on the south bank of the Shannon estuary. Planning permission was applied for on Thursday afternoon to Kerry Co. Council. The basic details are as follows. The project is estimated to cost £100m. It will take 2½ years to build. 650 will be employed on construction and in operation it will employ 500. The IDA hope to have all obstacles cleared in 6 months and expect to be ready to roll at that stage. But so far, if you regard the IDA as the bride to be, there is no bridegroom. There was one and he absconded - New Jersey Zinc. They parted recently - without breach of promise proceedings being issued by the tearful bride. The IDA reckoned that they had gained experience - even though the marriage was not consummated. It was the New Jersey plan that was being shown by the IDA on Thursday and a model of the New Jersey plant went on display at Ballylongford. Their approach now to the Planning Permission is the same as that of any farmer living near a town. Selling land with planning permission makes the project more profitable and more desirable. John Gannon, executive director of the IDA told the Press Conference that having the planning permission would make the proposition attractive to the 4 or 5 Smelting firms being courted.

As a Kerry journalist, I see my role in this as being the Devil's Advocate. I must assume that the Government and the IDA are trying to pull the wool over our eyes, by giving us something that no one else wants. I must assume that Kerry County Council are ill-equipped to deal with an application for Ireland's first smelter.

The IDA provided plenty of documentation to the press, but arriving 30 minutes late, they provided no time for studying the documents. They were more than willing, however, to answer every question and they did so for 45 minutes and they allowed the discussion to carry over during a luncheon. Their attitude was open, frank and co-operative. As far as the industry itself is concerned, we were assured that being an electrolytic smelter, there would be much less pollution than from a burning process. The plans were modern and had environmental safeguards. There would be pollution of air, and water, but this would be kept below acceptable levels and monitored by the Co. Council. In spite of the open and frank way they answered questions and possibly because of some of the answers which they gave, my between the ears computer began to give a warning buzz which has not yet ceased.



Tom Linehan, Regional Officer IDA (on right) handing over the Planning Application to Miss Lillian Carmody, Planning Dept., Kerry Co. Council. On left is Tom Collins, Co. Manager. Mr Linehan, formerly held the position of Planning Officer for Kerry Co. Council and in his time there he brought Miss Carmody into the service. Mr Collins recently visited Germany and Holland with Eamon O'Mahony, Co. Development Officer and an official from the Water Dept., to examine electrolytic smelters in connection with the proposed development in Kerry.



The IDA team at the Press Conference. From left Arthur Kavanagh, Assistant Manager Building Operations Division, Kieran McGowan, Manager of the Heavy Industry Section, John Gannon, Executive Director, Tom Linehan, Regional Manager and David Banks, Heavy Industry Division.



Aerial photo of the undeveloped site taken on Wednesday. In the background, on left, can be seen the faint outline of the Tarbert Generating Station.



The IDA speaks of 500 jobs being created from 400 acres of the finest land in Ireland. That is not a great number of jobs created at a cost of £100m. One acre of glass for plants in Kerry can employ eight people at a cost of £100,000 and produce £100,000 per year. At full output, the smelter will produce £45m of product. But full output in the zinc smelter industry is dependant on world demand - that now stands at 60% of capacity. This does not indicate that Ireland should not have the smelter. On the contrary, I feel we should, so that our present and future developed ore wealth should leave our shore in the most valuable form possible. Added value starts with having a smelting process. We may indeed be lucky that so few jobs are involved, so that in times of low demand, unemployment, from the fluctuating industry, will not become too great in this region.

The IDA indicates that all environmental considerations will be taken into account, 'depending on economic considerations'. They estimate approximately 5% of the total cost being spent on environmental considerations. That is a total commitment, with a built-in blind-fold brake, especially, when they are making it on behalf of a client who has not yet appeared. It was indicated that the Government would take a minority but substantial holding in the company. The debate on how much of the action the Irish Government would hold settled at the Press Conference at an in or around 25% - maybe. A 25% man would find it difficult to dictate to a majority owner on when environmental considerations become too expensive.

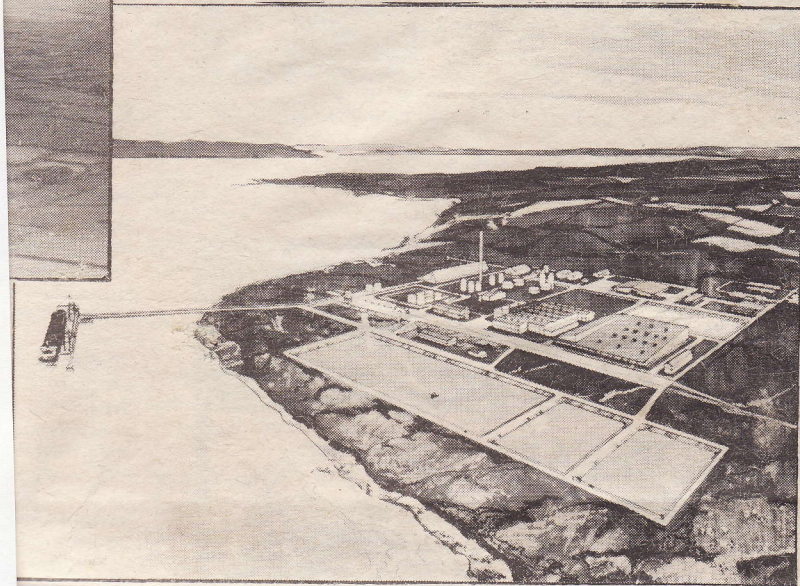
Asked if the IDA would pay towards the high travelling expenses etc, to enable Kerry Co. Council officials travel the smelter world to evaluate the smelter planning application, John Gannon was positive that they would not. It would be unethical, he felt.

Matt Lynch, Head of Environmental Technology, at the Government's Institute of Research & Standards admitted that having being retained as consultants by the IDA, Kerry Co. Council would have to look elsewhere for their own experts.

The problem of aerial pollution from the smelter was handled. Mr Lynch said that the levels of Sulphur Dioxide would be well within the acceptable level. It would be monitored by the Local Authority. Within clear sight of the smelter site is Tarbert Generating Station. Up river from it, is Auginish Alumina Ltd, that will be processing 5 times as much material as the Ballylongford Zinc Smelter. What will be the combined effect of the Sulphur Dioxide emissions on say, Limerick city, or the planned major holiday development at Kildysart in a westerly wind? The Press Conference did not provide the answer. But surely, the total effect must be taken into account, when levels are being permitted. In Holland, they have found that materials emitted from iron smelters have grounded 30 miles away. Iron smelting, carried out by burning process is accepted as being a very much dirtier industry than electrolytic smelting of zinc. But the pattern of airborne particles will be the same. The land around the Shannon Estuary at Ballylongford, is as flat as any part of Holland.

Water Pollution levels must take into account that the Shannon is Ireland's last remaining salmon river. Thanks to a re-stocking programme by the ESB, 25,000 salmon were landed at Dingle alone, from the mouth of the Shannon

Artist's impression of the completed smelter. Note the jetty and the high tower.



during the season just ended. The danger to salmon would come from either an acid leak into the estuary, oil spillage at the jetty or contaminated bilge water being emptied by foreign ships loading or unloading. The I.I.R.S. specifications were intended to handle acid spill and oil spill, but bilge water was not controlled. Mr Lynch had told the meeting that he was using American environmental standards for air pollution and Japanese standards for water pollution control, because these were the world's highest. Yet at a refinery I visited near Bremerhaven, one of the most rigorous conditions controlled bilge water from tankers, to eliminate pollution of sea waters. Ships, working it, have to pump their bilge water into the refinery, where it is chemically treated and purified and within a short time the refinery has become a supplier of water to surrounding villages. The County Council, An Taisce or the Fishermen's Association might find it interesting to examine a control on bilge water.

Would the IDA see their way towards financing the roads in the area, due to extra strain caused by the smelter? John Gannon, of the IDA did not think so. The Kerry County Council would benefit from the smelter being in the area, so that would be their problem. Did Mr Gannon think it unfair that the ratepayers of Kerry should have to provide back-up facilities to enable Ireland to have a smelter? He would not agree on that point. Did he think that a Harbour Authority should be created to set the rules and monitor them, to avoid the mistakes of Bantry, and in view of oil spillages that occurred at the privately controlled jetty by the ESB at Tarbert? Not a matter for the IDA or their client. But if the Kerry County Council brought in such a provision it could be acceptable, he thought.

It then emerged that Auginish Alumina on the Limerick side of Foynes would be paying harbour dues of £1 million to Limerick Harbour Board each year, though using their own private jetty, based on predicted tonnage. The tonnage at Ballylongford would be one-fifth of that so that a Harbour Authority could estimate on an income of £200,000 per annum. Informed Limerick journalists at the Press Conference told me that Foynes Harbour Board is getting so wealthy from ore shipments that they will not under any circumstances become part of a Shannon Estuary Joint Board. They want to remain on their own. Kerry Co. Council, on the other hand has only loss making small harbours - that act as a social service to small farmers and fishermen. They already lost their chance when the ESB were allowed the facility of a private jetty at Tarbert. The mistake should not be repeated.

Co. Manager Tom Collins told me, on Thursday afternoon, that his planning officers would be looking minutely at all aspects of this application. They would be retaining experienced consultants to advise them. They are already examining six such proposals, at least one of which had a Dublin office though the firm was British. He saw no problem in supplying sufficient water for the project. He did admit that the roadways in a six mile radius of the site were totally inadequate and would have to be brought up to a suitable standard, if the project were to go ahead. The work-to-rule by the Local Government Engineers would not delay the planning application, as it would be given top priority, he said.

CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE

Kerry's Eye Phone No. has been changed to (066) 23199

What Kerry should seek as a Smelter Tat

Kerry's Eye Phone No. has been changed to (066) 23199

When the Government places its Smelter in Kerry, there will be added pollution. That has been stated by Matt Lynch of I.I.R.S. It is not possible to have industry without pollution. I accept that it is possible with good planning and good monitoring to control pollution at most times to the permitted level. But our experience with planning has been such that I doubt if day to day management is interested in the question of pollution. On Wed. last I flew over the site of the ESB generating station at Tarbert. The clouds of smoke and steam from the twin 400 foot stacks are something that we now take for granted. On Wed, they were giving out a bit more than usual, as you can see from the photo. At the Press Conference, I asked Mr Lynch of IIRS, if the Research Institute was carrying out the monitoring of the emissions from the stacks at Tarbert. You could have knocked me down with a feather when he told me that the ESB were doing it themselves. I began to wonder who is working for the Irish people. We are promised that things will be different when the Anti Pollution Act - in force since April - is eventually operated by the work-to-rule engineers. Ireland has not yet emerged from the middle ages, if we allow a system whereby the polluters are expected to act on their honour - like boy scouts. This is the reality of the situation where we are asked to accept a smelter.

Mr Gannon of the IDA ruled out the possibility of ore being moved by road to the smelter. They proposed to use sea and rail links. They were considering the possibility of a spur line from Foynes or Listowel. The smelter is designed to handle the ore concentrates from Navan. Several times in the past few years, I made reference in Kerry's Eye to rich zinc deposits in Kerry. I told him that the Cork Examiner had published that one of the major Canadian Mining companies had this year in their annual report stated that their best zinc prospects in the world were in County Kerry. This would mean road transport. Mr Gannon disagreed, the cost would be too high. A rail line would be built, if needed for such a mine. Would he agree to a proposal that transport of ore, concentrates, or zinc by road should be barred by condition of the planning permission. He would not.

That brings us to the crunch. We are being asked to accept something for Ireland's sake that will bring less spin off employment than any other industry in Ireland. Since the ore will, we hope, come by sea or rail, we will not have petrol sales, transport personnel, garage repairs - haircuts, beef steaks - all the things eaten and used by those who are not directly involved in the industry. However, accepting the smelter must have an adverse effect on our tourism. Not because of pollution, but because of its existence in the premier tourist county of Ireland. Given the opportunity of going on a holiday to a place with a smelter or a place without a smelter, which would YOU go to? There is the added risk to our road system, if ore ever goes on our tar-ways. In my

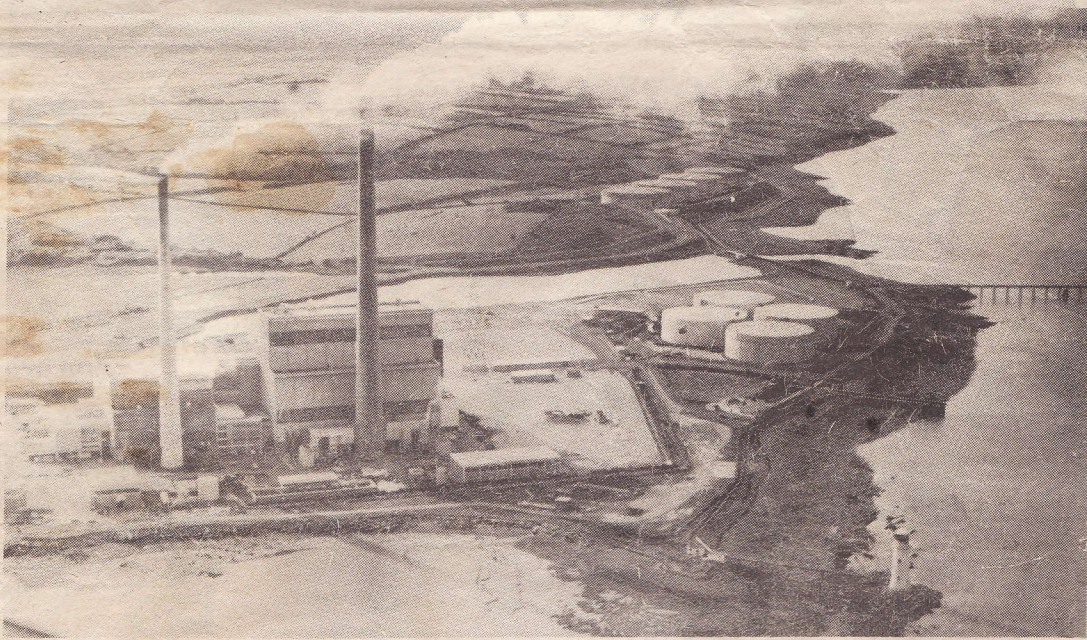
opinion, Kerry should accept the smelter, on grounds of patriotism, to help the nation. There are risks involved. But generally they are calculated risks. We should demand high compensation from the nation to help control the risk and to compensate for the loss in income growth of tourism - plus the loss of income of 500 acres of the best grazing land in Kerry. What type of compensation should we seek. We should get instant funds to bring the main roads from the Limerick border to the smelter and from Tralee to the smelter to top National Primary road standard. The smelter will be erected with concrete from Tralee. The Tralee/Listowel road is unable to take any additional traffic, due to its dangerous condition. The roads in the immediate area of the smelter should be properly upgraded to suit this need, rather than that of farmers coming from the creamery. Funds should be spent in Ballylongford on housing and the environment, since the people of the locality will bear the brunt of the stress and risk. Additional light industry should be planned into the area to balance service needs. There should be a guarantee of full monies and quick sanction for all water and other projects in the area. A National Smelter is not a normal industry, in the accepted sense of the word. The IDA should not press for Rates Relief, due to the fact that the ratepayers of Kerry will have to pay if the industry does not.

The most important demand should be that the jetty should be scrapped and that the shipments should be made by digging a deep harbour out of the site. The IDA state that there is 100 feet of water at the end of the jetty. The cheapest way of creating a harbour is to dig it from the land. For years, the IDA has been speaking of the potential of the Shannon Estuary. Without a proper Deep Sea Harbour that potential can never be realised. They muffed it with Tarbert, by allowing the ESB a private jetty. They likewise muffed it with Alcan by doing the same. If they allow the third major enterprise on the Shannon to use a private jetty rather than a public harbour, the Shannon can be written off as a major natural resource.

The West coast of Ireland is in need of a major harbour. The Shannon Estuary is the ideal location. The development of a proper commercial harbour on the Shannon would lead to many other industries that have not the environmental risk or bad reputation of a smelter. If Kerry is to be given the polluter of the industrial scene, it should be offered the compensation of such a harbour. The sand-bar at the mouth of the Shannon should also be cleared away. The estimated cost for that would be in the region of £2m - chicken feed towards the alternative of supplying most of Kerry's needs from Cork's deep port. Kerry should drive a tit-for-tat bargain. Unless we get something better than the present stale crust of the national cake, there would be little reason for our neglected county to play host to a smelly baby with an acid bottom.

POWER FOR THE SMELTER

The Tarbert Generating Station, this week. The proximity of it to the proposed site was one of the determining factors in deciding on the location. The Ballylongford Smelter would have a capacity of 100,000 metric tons per year - or 7½% of the West European Zinc production. So far, plans have not been announced for 'down stream' industries, such as rolled zinc, sacrificial and plating anodes, alloys, zinc dust and semi finished products.



Following the designation of Kerry full production

Moving on 30 Years later from 1978
to 2008;

from a Smelter to an LNG terminal.

What has changed? Please read
on...

November 2007

OPINION By Pádraig Kennelly

OPINION By Pádraig Kennelly



MEP campaigns against Kerry project

It is difficult to imagine an attack being mounted on a planned Kerry industrial project by a person elected by the people of Munster. Kathy Sinnott is a member of the European Parliament and has given a damning condemnation to the proposed Shannon LNG project at Tarbert.

The project has now gone for planning, on the shortened route allowed for infrastructural developments of national importance. And she has taken a submission on it to An Bord Pleanála.

Kathy Sinnott has submitted a press release to the media for publication after Wednesday, so I am availing of Kathy's invitation to comment.

There is no balance in Kathy's press release. It is emotive, but without being informative on the reasons for her negative viewpoint. It falls below her usual high standard of communication.

It is my considered opinion that had she taken the time to study the project and the recent history of this world-wide industry, she would have appreciated why it is welcome on each continent as being an important part of world economy. The industry has a very high reputation for setting and meeting health and safety standards and regulations.

If Kathy's proposal to end transport of LNG were successful, what would she propose to replace it? Some of the world's poorest countries have been blessed with one natural resource that they can trade to the world. What would Kathy offer from the EU to replace oil and natural gas for Nigeria, Niger, Indonesia and many other third world countries?

The right to be critical is universal. She condemns a project that is in the local and national interest. Kathy has failed to balance her condemnation with a proposal to promote an alternative that would meet the same national need and local employment. Her press statement makes no effort to address the purpose or benefits of the project or to acknowledge the history and suitability of the site.

The 600 acre landbank at Kilcolgan, between Tarbert and Ballylongford, was assembled and purchased 40 years ago by the Industrial Development Authority. It

remained in their hands until responsibility for the Estuary was transferred to Shannon Development.

Experts have described that section of the Shannon Estuary as being unique in Europe, having water depth in excess of 90 feet, allowing access to the world's largest tankers, ore carriers and container ships. Only Norway has fjords with a similar depth of water, but its steep cliffs prohibit harbour development.

West Africa is the proposed source of LNG for the Tarbert project. The building of two new canals at Panama is expected to be completed within 8 years. That will drastically reduce shipping costs of LNG from Australia and Indonesia, where piping the gas would be impractical due to distances involved. The melting polar cap will allow new sea routes to Europe. Deepening of Halifax and New York harbours is aimed at catering for the new bigger ore carriers and container ships.

Shannon Development is promoting Tarbert as the trans-shipment port to mainland Europe.

We have waited a long time for the first project to become a reality on the outer Shannon. It is headed by Tralee man, Paddy Power, who has over 30 years experience in senior positions in the industry. The project is backed by the experience and resources of one of the world's biggest and most successful players in the transport and marketing of liquefied natural gas.

It is a pity that Ms Sinnott's press comments do not reflect the care and diligence taken in planning all stages of this welcomed industry.

LNG Shannon is purchasing the land for the terminal from Shannon Development and will not be seeking government grants. Kathy Sinnott shows by her press comments that she has not studied the proposal in depth. Her words do not reflect the knowledge necessary to comment constructively on it or to condemn LNG transport as being dangerous. A campaign to prevent the industry and the jobs coming to Tarbert is hard to understand

The Republic of Ireland is facing an energy crisis. It is common case that we must act now. The long term continuity of supply from the Russian gas fields is not assured. Even when the Celtic gas field starts to flow, it will not solve the problem. Our energy uses are increasing and the new off shore gas fields are not meeting demand.

The alternative to gas is nuclear power. The government has rejected that option. And Kathy has ignored it. I presume that she will also oppose nuclear as a solution. Wind energy is expected to increase from 10% to just 13% of our needs. Ocean wave or current energy has not developed beyond the experimental stage. Her press statement condemns LNG as a product. Yet it is the cleanest and lowest cost source of non-renewable energy. If it is taken away, as Kathy wishes, we are left with the much bigger carbon footprint of coal or oil. She has not reasoned her argument well, condemning LNG as well as the location of the terminal.

I know what Kathy is against, but I cannot find from her article what she is for. She is a Joanie-come-lately into the question of Tarbert industrial land-bank. A Prime Time TV programme highlighted the concerns of a small local group. It showed a movie of a gas explosion in the USA in the 1940s, but failed to show that modern transport of liquefied natural gas had caused any disasters.

Sent to Europe to represent us in the Council of Europe days was South Kerry Dail Deputy, Chub O'Connor, Killorglin. He brought back an industry, Klinge, which has continued under succeeding owners, bringing unbroken employment and financial support to South Kerry. Did Kathy ever bring back an industry? Not that I heard of - and certainly not to Kerry.

Kathy suggests there are high tech jobs coming in quantities to replace the collapse of much of our light industrial jobs. The industrial era is over for the west of Ireland. In Kerry it ended twenty years ago. Our factories are now warehouses or are demolished to be replaced by apartments.

The ESB Is closing Tarbert Generating Station. LNG Shannon is examining building or facilitating a gas-fired electricity generating station. But not if Kathy Sinnott has her way. Kathy writes "Once the facts of LNG are known, I am confident that the local people will reject the proposal." If Kathy knows 'the facts' why planning should be refused, she has kept them a secret.

LNG Shannon opened a full time office in Listowel, staffed to executive level, to answer queries from those in the area or anyone interested in the project. It held public meetings, put models of the developed site and the LNG tankers on display and the top people in the project came and came again to answer all queries. The company took representatives of local development groups on visitation to working LNG terminals in Europe's west coast. And LNG Shannon distributed newsletters to households, to ensure locals were kept up-to-date on latest information.

Local and nation media provided generous space and time to ensure that the facts became well-known. No other industrialist setting up in Kerry did anything to equal LNG Shannon's effort to fill a need for information, that would otherwise leave a vacuum for false rumour. Kathy will find there is no information vacuum in the project that she can fill. A vacancy does not exist for one peddling negative nonsense.

Shipping liquefied gas in double-hulled tankers is not a high risk business. LNG is not flammable in that state. The only process planned to be carried out at Tarbert is to transfer the liquid to tanks for storage and to return it to the gas state to feed it into the national grid. The horror picture that Kathy paints, without offering any supporting facts, does not reflect the true situation.

Kathy Sinnott offers a 'boody man' to frighten children, when she suggests that Ireland will share the USA attacks from terrorists. She suggest the Shannon LNG ships will become prime targets. If she really feels that is so, she would be better off saving her efforts for the demolition of Europe's high rise buildings, so that they will not become terrorist targets.

Hopefully her MEP Irish colleagues will show themselves to be better informed, when they comment on national infrastructure projects.

Kerrys Eye: Phone 353 66 71 49200 Email: news@kerryseye.com

Arguing against Tarbert project

I would like to respond to Mr. Kennelly's op-ed piece about my stance on the liquid natural gas (LNG) terminal. I would also greatly appreciate you publishing the press release his article referred to at length but which readers have had no opportunity to see for themselves.

My press release was written to introduce the arguments against siting an LNG terminal in Kerry in an accessible way especially for those who have not heard of the project or who know little about LNG.

I have looked at the literature handed out at public meetings held locally and noted the lack of accurate information on risk, environmental impact, legal status and long term employment given.

As decisions on whether or not the LNG facility will go ahead in Kilcolgan are to be made shortly, I felt that given the enormity of the consequences for the people of Kerry and Limerick they should at least be aware of the existence of the project and of the negative aspects left out of the company's literature.

I found it hard to see how Mr. Kennelly came to the conclusion that I was ill informed on the matter.

Because of the importance to my constituents and my constituency, I have on the contrary

taken a great deal of time to inform myself. For a more technical account of my public health, legal, environmental and safety objections to the proposed LNG terminal, anyone can read my submission to An Bord Pleanna.

I have also had to be informed on LNG because as Vice Presi-

Kathy Sinnott MEP responds to last week's editorial on the Tarbert LNG development.



dent of the Petitions Committee in the European Parliament, I am studying an extensive petition lodged by a very large group of local residents in Wales to the LNG facility which is soon to open there.

A couple of issues, I will

address here as Mr Kennelly has brought them up and I did not address it in my column. LNG is not an alternative energy it is, like oil and coal a non renewable fossil fuel of which the world has a limited amount.

On the issue of helping the

source countries like Niger and Nigeria by buying this gas, I would put to you that one of the problems for the development of these countries is that rich multinationals in cooperation with corrupt local administrators are stripping them of their natural but finite resources.

The poor do not benefit from this cosy arrangement. There was a famine in my column two years ago and many people especially children died. All during that famine, energy companies were making mega money exporting both this gas

and oil from the country.

On the contrary, a prudent and far sighted use of this gas for the development of the countries in which it is found would go a long way to helping these countries develop a stable economy.

Selling it and piping it within Africa would involve only the normal risks posed by gas in its natural state. The extreme risk comes from the liquefaction of the gas for shipping which concentrates it 600 times.

Thank you,
Kathy Sinnott MEP
Munster
Environment, Public Health
and Food Safety Committee

MEP'S ARTICLE 'ILL-INFORMED'

Kathy Sinnott has requested that we publish her article attacking the proposal to construct a tank farm for liquefied natural gas (LNG) at Kilcolgan, Tarbert. On Wednesday, 21st November, her office e-mailed the article with a condition attached. It would be published in the Evening Echo on Wednesday and we could comment on it 'after Wednesday'.

BY PADRAIG KENNELLY

I had no difficulty complying with that condition, as I regarded the article as being unbalanced, ill-informed and an attempt, as she admitted, to urge 'that local people will reject the proposal'.

To publish her article would be to further spread the mis-information and give it credence. Her allegations are spurious. Her article was emotive, totally lacking in facts.

In her letter Kathy has not responded to

the charge that she wrongly tagged LNG as being 'incredibly explosive'.

Even junior second level students would learn that LNG is one of a group of substances listed under the heading 'cannot burn or explode'.

But that does not stop her describing it as being 'one of the most dangerous technologies that a Eurocrat in Brussels would wish to locate on 'the remote West coast of Europe.'

That statement is bunkum. It is an insult

to Irish and EU intelligence and to whatever EU official she had in mind.

Congratulations to Kathy on her political advancement to being a Vice President of the Petitions Committee in the European Parliament.

I have long held the view that being nominated or elected to office does not confer any wisdom. More is needed.

I am glad that Kathy says she is reading up on the LNG subject, very necessary if she is to become well-informed. Life-long study is essential to all commentators. I would think that she would benefit from a lot more reading more from well-informed sources.

It might help Kathy if she includes a

study of the website of U.S. Department of Energy and examine the feature on Fossil Energy. Forty years of accident free transport of LNG on the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans is an impressive record for any product.

I hope she will have an input in ensuring that conditions attached to LNG Shannon planning permission, when granted, for the off-shore and on-shore facilities at Tarbert will contain stringent regulations and current environmental standards of control.

As the final two paragraphs of her letter have nothing to do with the matter of Tarbert, I am not going to accept the good lady's invitation to waltz to that music. But should she ever manage to be successful in arranging for a major industry to be established in Kerry, I would be happy to change my tune.

KERRY'S EYE

29th November 2007

OPINION By Padraig Kennelly



Tarbert gas will flow

The Bord Pleanala oral hearing at the Brandon Hotel on the Shannon LNG application to set up a LNG tank farm at Kilcolgan, Tarbert ended on Wednesday. Chaired by Inspector Andrew Boyle, it heard 6 days of evidence, 10am to 6pm, with a 10-5pm day on Tuesday and a shorter final day on Wednesday.

The Shannon LNG team was the most impressive ever gathered in one room in Kerry. Headed by Tralee man Paddy Power, it included world experts in many aspects of the liquefied gas industry, ecology and all the natural sciences.

Its experts included tank design and double-hulled refrigerated ships to bring the liquefied gas at -160 degrees C, from ports on the West African coast.

The Shannon LNG experts - about 16 of them were directed by Senior Counsel, Hugh O'Neill. Answering queries on a possible accidental sinking of a tanker, the Shannon LNG team produced a Lloyd's register of world-wide accidents to carriers in excess of 50,000 tons DWT that suffered sinking or collision, at sea or in ports in the past 15 years. Of 154 ships identified, only 17 involved double bottom or full double bottom and side skinned construction. Only one LNG carrier (Norman Lady, 2002) was involved in a serious collision incident. It took place in deep waters and there was no damage to the inner hull.

Then came questions on possible terrorist attacks, with allegations of the LNG ships being more dangerous than an atom bomb. The Shannon LNG experts flicked the danger away by saying that in the event of a terrorist attack, if a tanker was in their port, it would be ordered to leave immediately and if it was at sea, it would be ordered not to enter the Shannon region.

I thought it offered a good opportunity to the opposition to suggest that terrorists do not usually announce their destructive plans. They didn't. Nor did they look for more details when a building on the construction area was referred to as the 'guard room'.

It seemed that nobody who attended the full hearing really wanted the hearing to result in Bord Pleanala turning down the Shannon LNG application.

The witness whose evidence might have been expected to cause a turn down was Senior Inspector in Health and Safety Authority, Pat Conneely. In direct evidence he said that the Shannon LNG had met their criteria. When pushed by John McElligott representing the Kilcolgan Residents whether this was his final position, Mr Conneely said that new evidence presented during the Hearing would be assessed as well as documents that were submitted to HSA on Jan. 11th. Pressure of work did not allow time to evaluate this information, as it would take three days to do so. That may mean that the advice to An Bord Pleanala could be 'reviewed'. The HSA would let An Bord Pleanala know its

decision.

Of those who questioned details of the project, by far the best informed was Tarbert man John McElligott, representing the Kilcolgan Residents. He obviously made a study of the project and kept many of the experts on their toes.

But I think he had no wish to inflict a fatal blow. Tarbert was also represented by Michael McElligott of the Tarbert Chamber of Commerce. He told the hearing that the vast majority of the business fraternity in Tarbert fully supported the application.

The Marine Archaeologist for Shannon LNG gave evidence of items found in the sea near the proposed jetty site. One item was a motor car. He said it was of no interest. Perhaps the gardai would take an interest. It might solve some mystery crime.

A by-product of the Hearing was an educational lesson on the fish that swim in the Shannon. The Dolphin follow the ferry on its 24 daily crossings. Dr Simon Burrow stated that the Dolphin likes big ships and take advantage of the bow wave to move abreast of the ships entering or leaving Shannon waters.

The birds including curlew, lapwing and ringed plover, will not be affected. The project must make space for new setts for badgers and provide bat boxes to replace the present breeding homes of some small pipistrella bats now residing in a derelict house.

And the expert ecologist Carl Dixon expected no special difficulty in moving the common frog into a new abode.

Paddy Power's catchy slogan: 'Shannon LNG is the right project, in the right place and at the right time' became the mantra, being used by several speakers.

An Taisce was represented by Dr Catherine McMullin, Mrs Maeve O'Donnell and Bernie Goggin, but they posed no six mark questions to the developer.

The people of Listowel and Tarbert and Ballylongford were love-bombed with information by Shannon LNG since the programme was first announced. An office in Listowel managed by Michael Biggane made sure that information kept flowing into the community.

I don't think that bookmaker Paddy Power would accept any bet that the project would be turned down.

The decision by An Bord Pleanála will be delivered before the end of March. It is on the new fast track route. Construction is expected to begin before the end of this year. And no negative information backed by facts was presented. Cathy Sinnott MEP gave a short statement on Monday. In it she described LNG as being 'dirty and dangerous' but did not expand on the phrase with any facts.

Stage I of the project will see 50 tankers a year off loading onto two 50 m high tanks.

Stage II will see 125 ships per year.

The gas at Tarbert could be piped to Tralee, Listowel and Killarney. However, that is unlikely to happen unless Kerry County Council become active in demanding and promoting it for domestic and commercial use.

Ogie Moran of Shannon Development, owners of the landbank, put paid to suggestions that the remainder of the landbank would be 'frozen'. He said they were promoting it for development and deep water would be available to any new project. Queries had already been received.

I hope during the construction phase to publish occasional articles based some of the very interesting information made available during the Oral Hearing.

Congratulations to Paddy Power for bringing home the bacon. False hopes of Landbank projects were raised on many occasions. Only the most dedicated maintained faith in it being developed.

But nobody would have forecast that a Kerryman would be the agent responsible for the first project.

This is the first project to be presented as essential national infrastructure, it bypassed

the County Council Planning. It is not a satisfactory piece of legislation for communities that have doubts. In this case, the local objectors had to fly in their own expert from the USA. Neither the Health and Safety Association nor the County Council explained why they were satisfied with the evidence of the applicant or if they had any experience of such a project.

Just as in the Planning Mahon Tribunal, a community group should be state funded, even if only to employ experts to act the role of the devil's advocate. Nor did the Board Pleanala Inspector give any indication that he was qualified to decide on such a project. For future fast track planning applications, we should learn from this to ensure there will be a meaningful examination of first time proposals, with equal knowledge available to Bord Pleanala, the applicant and community groups.