

MATTIE McGRATH TD

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER



ISSUE No #1. SPRING 2009



A Chara,

I am delighted to present my very first edition of this community Newsletter to help keep you my Constituents informed of my ongoing work to represent the people of South Tipperary and West Waterford and to discuss any issues that may be of concern to you.

Should you feel that I can be of any assistance to you, a family member or friend, please do not hesitate to contact me and I look forward to representing the people of South Tipperary and West Waterford in Dail Eireann going forward.

Is mise,

South Tipperary General Hospital

HANDS OFF OUR HOSPITAL!!!

It is my belief that what is needed is a radical change in the direction of health care policy in both the Department of Health and Children and the Health Service Executive. Democratic accountability must return to the office of the Minister and services must remain in our local hospital.

We must have a health care system that truly places the patient first and is geared to meeting the needs of our Community. I am and will remain committed to and will use every possible avenue open to me to keep all services in our Hospital!

Clonmel Flooding

Unfortunately Clonmel Town & some villages up stream were severely affected by the recent flooding. I am continuing to lobby the Government on the issue. I want to complement all the agencies locally and the Community Welfare Officials for their help with the rescue efforts. I am extremely concerned at some aspects of the scheme and indeed the pace at which it is progressing and I would like to assure the families and businesses affected that I will spare no effort in trying to resolve the matter.



Help available during the Recession!

As the recession across the World and in Ireland continues to worsen, we have seen a dramatic rise in the number of people who have lost their jobs. At the end of January, there were some 328,000 people on the Live Register, 36,500 more in that month alone and 146,000 more than at the end of January last year.

It is a frightening and traumatic experience for the newly unemployed person and their family. The prospect of being made redundant is a very real worry for others whose firms are facing serious problems due to the downturn in business.

To try ease the burden, I have put together the most relevant and practical sources of advice for those suffering a large drop of income at this time. (see page 3)

While I believe that we as a Government must do more to tackle the bankers and the high earners and continue to express these views to Government, I feel that it is important to also get the message across that there is help out there and that no one is alone.

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Home Energy Saving Scheme

The Government has this week announced a new Home Energy Saving Scheme. This scheme provides assistance to homeowners who are interested in improving the energy efficiency of their home in order to reduce energy use and costs and greenhouse gas emissions. It is a national scheme and thus open to all owners of existing houses. The scheme is administered by Sustainable Energy Ireland and its agents.

The scheme has been launched now in order to allow interested contractors to apply for registration. Once there are sufficient registered contractors available to the scheme there will be a further announcement regarding householder applications and I will keep you informed.

What type of work can I get a grant for and for how much?

Grants will be provided to homeowners who invest in energy efficiency improvements in the following area:

MEASURE	CATEGORY	GRANT
Roof	Roof Insulation	€250
Wall	Cavity Wall Insulation	€400
	Internal Wall Dry- Lining	€2500
	External Wall Insulation	€4000
Heating Controls	High Efficiency Gas or oil fired boiler	€700
	Heating Controls Upgrade	€500

**For more information
or to register your interest,
please call 1850 927 000
or email hes@sei.ie
and check out www.sei.ie**

ADVICE CLINICS

I CONTINUE TO HOLD ADVICE CLINICS REGULARLY IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

- CAHIR:** Every Friday 11am — 12:30pm in the Enterprise Centre, Market Yard
- TIPPERARY TOWN:** 1st Monday of each month at 4pm in the Community Services Centre.
- CARRICK ON SUIR:** 1st Saturday of each month in The Community Centre, Carrick Beg 11:30am– 12:20pm and in Butlers Bar, John Street, 12:30pm– 1:30pm.
- CLONMEL:** I hold clinics on Mondays & Fridays in my Constituency Office by appointment and appointments can be arranged by phoning the office on 052-6129155.

*Mattie holds advice clinics in all local villages on a regular basis.
Please refer to local press, venues and posters for a time and a date.*

Oireachtas Committee Update

Since becoming elected to Dail Eireann, I have become a member of a number of Oireachtas Committee's namely:

- Joint Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries & Food
- Social and Family Affairs and
- I am Government Convenor of the Joint Committee on Communications energy and natural resources,

Major issues that we have dealt with on these committees include the Pork Crisis, Broadcasting bill and the quality and cost of services i.e. esb, telecommunications, Broadband and fuel etc.

If you feel that I can raise any issue or if you would like any further information in relation to the ongoing work of these committees please let me know.

HAVE YOUR SAY!

There is a number of interesting bills coming up for discussion in Dail Eireann in 2009 namely:

- Planning & Development Bill
- Civil Partnership Bill
- Child Care Bill
- Road Traffic & Transport Bill
- Criminal Justice Bill
- & many others which are listed on my website.

As I am elected to represent the people of South Tipperary, I want to hear your thoughts, issues and concerns. If you have any comments in relation to any of the upcoming bills or indeed any other issue that you feel I should be raising by way of a Parliamentary question or Dail Motion, please let me know

HELP AVAILABLE DURING THE RECESSION!

MORTGAGES AND BANKS

If a person is likely to fall into arrears with a loan or mortgage repayment it is imperative that the person seeks a revised repayment arrangement with the bank/ building society/ credit union as soon as possible.

A person will have to persuade the bank/ building society/ credit union that their case is genuine and that they will fulfil the new

arrangement.

Mandatory new rules on mortgage mediation is to be introduced shortly by the Government to ease the fears of persons afraid of losing their homes due to payment arrears. The new rules will include all mortgage providers including sub-prime lenders. It will commit banks to work with homeowners who have gone into arrears, seek

to reschedule payments, provide for help from budget advisers and delay the start of legal proceedings.

If we are going to bail out the banks with your money then the banks must take a more humane approach. We must ensure that the banks become more flexible in helping those who come into difficulty and ensure that no family loses their home.

Social Welfare Jobseekers Benefit

You can claim Jobseeker's benefit if you are:

- Unemployed (including a 3 day week)
- Are under 66 years of age and capable of work
- Are available for and genuinely seeking work
- Jobseekers Benefit can be paid for a maximum of 12 months to new claimants who have at least 260 paid PRSI contributions. You can apply for Jobseeker's Allowance at your local Social Welfare Office 9:30– 5:30 Mon– Fri.
- As this benefit depends on PRSI Payments and is not means tested, payment is fairly quick.

Jobseekers Allowance

You may get Jobseeker's Allowance if you don't qualify for Jobseeker's Benefit or if you have used up your entitlement to Jobseeker's Benefit (PRSI Contributions)

- Jobseeker's allowance is means tested and your means must be below a certain level to qualify.
- The maximum weekly rate for new claims is €204.30
- Apply for Jobseekers Benefit at your local Social Welfare Office.
- Because it is a means tested allowance, evidence of income is necessary. Delays currently vary from 2–10 weeks depending on the office.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance

If you have little or no income, you may be entitled to the basic supplementary Welfare Allowance.

- You should apply for Supplementary Welfare Allowance to the Community Welfare Officer at your local health centre.
- If you have claimed a social welfare benefit but it has not yet been paid and you have no other income, you may qualify for this while you are waiting.

Rent Supplement

- Paid to people living in private rented accommodation who cannot provide for the cost of their accommodation from their own resources.
- In general if your only income is a social welfare or Health Services Executive (HSE) payment, you will qualify for a rent supplement.
- You can apply for rent supplement at your Local Health Office.

Tax Relief

Are you getting all the tax relief you are entitled to?

- A full list of tax relief is available from www.revenue.ie or by phoning 1890 444 425 and include:

Rent Relief
Home Carer Relief
Trade Union Fees
Waste Charges
Medical Insurance Fees
Tuition Fees etc.

Financial Advice

Money Advice & Budgeting Service (MABS)

MABS offers free and confidential advice for people in debt or in danger of getting into debt.

MABS have offices in:

Clonmel: (1800 302 402)

Carrick on Suir: (051-645077)

Tipperary Town: (062-33410)

To find out more about MABS and their services log on to www.mabs.ie

Improving your Skills and Employability

While waiting to find a job– and this may be difficult and frustrating until economic growth resumes– there is a great benefit in improving your skills and employability. This can be done by signing up for full or part– time education or training programmes.

On Feb 5th the Tanaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment Mary Coughlan TD announced that: “ FAS will provide an additional 51,000 places over the 27,000 previously planned in 2009 under the Bridging Foundation Training, Specific Skills Training and Traineeship Programmes. These Programmes will provide

short training courses for job– changers or those recently unemployed”.

This represents an almost trebling to 78,000 the training places to be provided this year by FAS. Details of these programmes can be found on www.fas.ie , or by phoning FAS Employment Services Office in Clonmel on 052-82240.

Tipperary Institute and Waterford Institute of Technology as well the South Tipperary VEC offer many different courses and you should contact these for more information.

Top Bankers/ Regulator must be held accountable

I am calling for a High Court Inspector to be appointed to investigate Anglo Irish Bank and I believe that there may be a case for sending in the Criminal Assets Bureau.

Amid a new scandal hitting the banking sector this week after it emerged that Anglo Irish Bank may have sought to misrepresent its financial strength prior to its meltdown by securing up to €7 billion in deposits from Irish

Life and Permanent. The bulk of the money was transferred on September 30, shortly after the Government had guaranteed deposits in all banks and as a result I am calling for a full inspection. “These actions look very suspicious and to the ordinary person on the street it further gives the impression that the banking system is out of control. I have already called for all bank directors involved in these

scandals to be removed from their positions and to be investigated.”

If these investigations show that laws have been breached then they must be held accountable. It is morally wrong for the Government to use Tax Payers money to bail out these banks and leave the bankers Scott free and I am looking for the legal system pertaining to the banks to be updated.

OTHER LOCAL NEWS

Burncourt & Fethard Regional Water Scheme

I recently welcomed the announcement by Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government Mr. John Gormley T.D. that he had approved South Tipperary County Council's Design review proposals for the Burncourt & Fethard Water Supply Scheme which have a combined cost of €15.3 million.

Since then there has been and will be a significant delay in order to secure the water abstraction orders necessary for the Fethard supply. I had lobbied hard for the approval of these schemes and I am currently working with Minister Gormley in an effort to have these two schemes separated as they were in the past so that the Burncourt Scheme can go to tender without any further delay as this scheme is already extracting water from Glengarra and should not need a new abstraction order.

M8 Land & House Owners to be paid

I am delighted that under the recent round of funding from the Department of Transport, South Tipperary and Cahir Families will finally be paid after their land was taken under Compulsory Purchasing orders for the new M8.

There has been a huge delay in these payments from South Tipperary County Council but this recent allocation of €29million should ensure that all land and house owners who have signed agreements will finally be paid.

I was appalled with the long delay that many of these families endured and I am currently examining the law in relation to Compulsory Purchasing Orders which is due for discussion shortly in Dail Eireann under the Planning and Development Bill. I believe that at least 50% of property value should be paid before possession is taken and I will be raising this matter in due course.