

MEDIA RELEASE

THE CASE FOR A RAIL STOP AT CRUSHEEN NEEDS TO BE STRENGTHENED – TONY KILLEEN

- Clare County Council and Crusheen Community Council to meet Minister Cullen

Crusheen, County Clare, IRELAND, 12th April 2007 – Minister for Labour Affairs and Clare T.D., Mr. Tony Killeen today said that the case for reopening Crusheen Railway Station as part of the Western Corridor needs to be strengthened if it is to be realised.

His comments followed Iarnród Éireann's confirmation that the projected future population growth and development of the North Clare village could not support the reopening of the station. Minister Killeen described the news as “*disappointing*” but expressed optimism that a stronger argument could convince Iarnród Éireann to reopen the rail stop.

In correspondence on the matter, Iarnród Éireann stated, “*Crusheen was identified as a large village with capacity for expansion within the county settlement strategy in the North Clare Local Area Plan 2005. The plan states that population statistics indicate a potential growth of 50 units over the plan period. This limited expansion could not justify a station.*”

Minister Killeen, however, has learned that Iarnród Éireann has suggested that it would be happy to work with the developers on a potential station scheme if Clare County Council puts forward new information on future population growth. As a result and following on from a request by local Fianna Fáil Councillor Michael Kelly, Minister Killeen has arranged a meeting between the Minister for Transport and representatives of Clare County Council and Crusheen Community Council. The meeting with Minister Martin Cullen is scheduled to take place over the coming days.

Minister Killeen has also raised the issue in a recent meeting with Pat the Cope Gallagher T.D., Minister of State for Transport and Senior Officials from the Department of Transport.

He said, *“There remains a strong argument for the reopening of the rail stop at Crusheen, which I hope can be impressed upon Iarnród Éireann and the Minister for Transport in the coming weeks and months. Next week’s meeting will provide the Local Authority and the people of Crusheen with an opportunity to explain to Minister Cullen why exactly a rail stop is essential to the future growth and needs of Crusheen and its catchment area”*, stated Minister Killeen.

In November 2006, Minister Killeen proposed that a rail stop be provided in Crusheen on the Ennis to Athenry section of the Western Rail Corridor project. Minister Killeen presented the proposal to Iarnród Éireann after receiving strong representations from community groups and constituents in Crusheen and elsewhere in the North Clare area. His proposal has since received the backing of lobby group West On Track and Mr. Éamon Ó Cuív, T.D., Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

Minister Killeen indicated that a number of factors justified the reopening of the rail stop. He said, *“Two stops are being provided for between Gort and Athenry and none on the very long stretch of railway between Ennis to Gort. Crusheen is an ideal location for people coming from Ruan, Corofin, Tubber, Boston and elsewhere in north Clare as well as Tulla and other areas of East Clare.”*

“The costs associated with establishing and maintaining the proposed railway stop would not be excessive. The provision of a ticket vending machine, for example, would lessen the need for the stop to be manned on a full-time basis”, the Minister added.

Minister Killeen said that the lack of direct access from the Ennis Bypass to Ennis Railway Station also supported the argument for the opening of Crusheen Railway Station, which is located close Ennis Bypass.

“Iarnród Éireann and Minister Pat the Cope Gallagher were unaware that there was no direct access provided to Ennis Railway Station from the Bypass. I have informed

them of the benefits of establishing a rail stop at Crusheen, as it is conveniently located near the Bypass and would provide the people of North Clare with direct access to Ennis Railway Station and beyond. This factor, previously unknown to both parties, could play a significant role in the reopening of the rail stop”, Minister Killeen concluded.

In early 2006, the Government approved funding for the reopening of the Ennis to Athenry section of the Western Rail Corridor, as well as the Athenry-Tuam section. Once track renewal works on the Ennis to Athenry section are completed in 2008, an expected seven trains per day will travel from Ennis to Athenry with stops at Gort, Ardrahan and Craughwell.