

IRD Kiltimagh Ltd.

Media Statement

Tir na nÓg - Outdoor playground.



This media statement is being issued following a further meeting with Mayo County Council in relation to the opening of the Outdoor Playground. We understand this meeting was sought by Mayo County Council, on foot of a further approach to them by the lobby group established to campaign for the outdoor play facilities owned by IRD Kiltimagh Ltd. to be free of any charge and to be open at all times.

IRD Kiltimagh has once more explained that what we offer in terms of a product is not comparable with the facilities that are provided by the council in other locations. In most situations, the outdoor playground in Kiltimagh is a multiple of the size of the facilities in other towns, but most importantly, it is a safe and secure environment for children, supervised at all times. It is monitored by CCTV at all times and is secured from the perspective of vandalism, bullying and other potential threats to the safety of a child. Arguably, this is what the admission fee covers, rather than just access to a facility.

It should be remembered that the location of the current facility does not have the benefit of passive supervision. In other words, if children decide to use it without an adult present, they do not have even the protection of passing traffic or people to be alerted to any difficulty they may find themselves in. In addition, the same lack of passive supervision applies to those who may deliberately or accidentally cause damage to the facility. A simple and reasonable question would be; “In the event of the outdoor section being opened 24/7 and for free, who will fix damaged equipment or sweep up broken glass from the outdoor play area”? Mayo County Council accepts that they do not have the resources to ensure the same level of maintenance as is currently provided by IRD. A second question would be “In the event of a child being assaulted or otherwise injured, who will take responsibility”? At present, IRD Kiltimagh Ltd ensures that the facility is safe, secure, monitored and maintained to a very high standard.

In addition to this a further concern we have is that the availability of a free outdoor play area adjacent to the indoor facility, Maghus Castle may well impact negatively on the business of the indoor area. The playground business (indoor and outdoor) operates on a non profit basis with any small profit being made being put back into new and enhanced play items. Any reduction of income overall may well see the closure of the indoor section. In simple terms, we strongly believe that opening the facility as the lobby group demands will see the closure of both the indoor and outdoor facilities in a matter of a short time. This is not what Kiltimagh needs.

To try and reach a compromise, and recognising the valid arguments being made by the lobby group in relation to larger families from the area who would wish to use the facilities on an extensive basis, we have offered a family membership on a calendar year basis, at €50 for the first child (less than €1 per week), €30 for the second child

and €20 for the third and each subsequent child. For a family with three children, this works out at less than €2 per week or 60cent per child for unlimited usage at all times when the facility is open.

We have also offered to extend the opening hours subject to availability of staff and usage, during the longer evenings. The facility must be staffed to be insured and to have the safety and security benefits already mentioned. No response has been forthcoming on this and based on current responses and usage there is no requirement to extend the opening hours beyond their current levels.

In summary, we feel that having a free and constantly open facility in this location is not sustainable and endangers the safety of children who may use it. We have dealt with the gross misinformation as regards the funding of the playground, with the lobby group representatives, whom we met last October. We have offered a compromise in the family membership, which is affordable and we will extend the opening hours subject to the staff availability and usage. We have even offered a site for free to the lobby group, should they and their supporters wish to fundraise to provide and operate their own facility. We also believe that our facility is not comparable with the facilities offered for free in other towns and that the charge covers the scale, quality, maintenance to a high standard and the safety & security of the facility, and more particularly, the children that use it.

Many of those who are involved in or who support the lobby group will be involved in businesses themselves. They will know just how hard it is to survive at the best of times but particularly at the moment. The indoor and outdoor playground is no different and must operate as a business. If it doesn't operate by those principles, it won't survive. There are no magic sources of income to maintain the facility to its current standard. If it does not have the ability to trade, it is likely that both indoor and outdoor facilities will close. We are sure that this is not what the lobby group want for their children and the children of others coming along and wishing to have the use of such a facility in future years. Of course, we would love to be able to provide all of our services for free and have as many people as possible benefit from this free usage. Unfortunately, this is not realistic and as such, we have sought to be as compromising as possible by way of the family membership.

We look forward to the continuing support of the families of the Kiltimagh area and together, we can ensure that current and future generations of children can avail of facilities of the highest standard for a nominal fee.

IRD Kiltimagh Ltd.

5th April 2011

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