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ON SUNDAY



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Drug centre unlikely now, says minister

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'nimbyism gone mad' by one Fine Gael TD. Merchants Quay Ireland was awarded the tender to run a pilot programme for Ireland's first medically supervised injecting facility at the start of last year.

It tabled plans to operate it in the basement of its Riverbank premises on Merchants Quay, after campaigners forced it to seek planning permission for the change of use.

Earlier this week, Dublin City Council granted MQI more time to provide an Operational Management Plan that would detail how concerns about the day-to-

'Beside a local DEIS school? This is mad'

day function of the service will be addressed.

The supervised injecting centre was contained in the 2016 Programme for Government, with the hope it would be opened in 2017.

But the plans have been beset by delays. The MoS previously revealed how an internal Garda report, into how the centre would function, stated: 'The Bill suspends the provisions of Section 3 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1977 as amended in the injection centre, but is silent on how an authorised user gets to this centre while possessing a controlled drug. The Bill is also silent on how an authorised user can be properly identified when not at the centre.'

On the 'authorised users', it asked: 'Are we to take them at their word?' It said, should possession be decriminalised within a certain distance of the centre, at cer-

Re: Planning Application No. 4121/18
Location - 13/14 Merchant's Quay (Riverbank Building), Dublin 8, D08 KT61

Dear Sirs,
I refer to the above planning application number. I wish to lodge the following observations:

- Health and Safety concerns:
 - a) this raises safety concerns for residents and workers and creates a danger to children from used needles and drug paraphernalia.
 - b) Such use of the premises leads to anti-social groups congregating in the immediate area, the surrounding streets and laneways, engaging in drug and alcohol abuse and physical fighting.
 - c) Residents, children and works will be coming and going from the area at the same time as the clients.
 - d) Individuals have been seen hiding drugs in flowerbeds, behind electricity poles and in bundles of leaves along the road which could easily be picked up by a child or member of the public.
 - e) Individuals have been seen urinating and defecating on the streets.
 - f) Individuals have been seen injecting drugs and drug dealing on the streets.
 - g) Individuals have entered private premises to inject drugs resulting in areas having to be closed off until sanitised at an additional cost.
 - h) Users of the Adam and Eve church are afraid to enter the premises.
 - i) Users of Dublin Bus are afraid to wait at the bus stop and there have been many attempts to snatch mobile phones.
- Gardaí shortage
- Over-concentration of services for drug addicts in Dublin 8
- In such an historic part of Dublin frequented by tourists, the risks re assault, mugging, and witnessing anti-social behaviour could have a detrimental impact on the economy.

Yours faithfully
Yvonne Kelly,
Health Business Services HSE

tain times, it would be 'impossible to police'.

The minister in charge of the project, Catherine Byrne, has

previously admitted to the MoS that the project was facing delays.

Ministers and TDs said the HSE's bizarre planning objection to the

CONCERN: A letter from the HSE containing a long list of objections to the Dublin city centre injecting facility

centre - which has been beset by delays, opposition and objections - is helping to ensure the project never gets going.

Junior minister Finian McGrath said: 'The HSE objecting to this themselves is going to make it unlikely to proceed.'

The Independent Alliance TD also opposes the location of the centre at Merchants Quay. 'I expected the HSE to support their policy and I am surprised that somebody in the HSE is objecting to it,' he asked.

When asked whether he agrees with Government colleagues that the objection will have an influence on the project not going ahead, he replied: 'I do, I do yeah.' He said he believes it will not go ahead.

'I just feel strongly that people who are addicted to drugs, where possible, should be treated in their own community,' he added. 'I do think it lacks balance and fairness by having a lot of centres in the city centre.'

A Fine Gael TD in a Dublin constituency with drug problems said the 99 objections have convinced the Government that the project is too unpopular to proceed.

'The project has few friends in Government now,' said the TD, 'it was ill conceived in the first place.'

Now, when you have the HSE objecting to a project it is supposed to be promoting itself then you can see that this is something that the Government simply does not want to happen. It must be remembered that this was left over from the Labour/Fine Gael coalition. Labour are gone now.'

Injection centres were called for by then Labour junior minister Aodhán Ó Ríordáin in 2015 but he lost his seat the following year. However, the issue made it into the Programme for Government of the current administration and was passed with cross-party support un-

'Hotel owned by Bono and the Edge objected'

der the 'new politics'. Another Fine Gael TD said: 'It's nimbyism gone mad, but it also shows you how ill-conceived it is. The HSE's heart is not in it, this objection shows.'

Martin Harte, the CEO of the Temple Bar Company which has objected to a supervised injection centre from the outset, says it is clear the project is finished.

'It shows how poorly thought out this project is, firstly they forgot to address the planning question, then they decide to locate it beside a DEIS primary school. It is mad.'

In total there were 99 objections, including one from the Clarence Hotel, which is co-owned by Bono and the Edge, which voiced its concerns about the effects on the local business community.

A spokeswoman for the HSE said they are continuing to work to address safety concerns at the proposed injection centre.

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