

SCHOOLS GUIDE TO PRESIDENCY

Day 2 of our series: Page 12/13



110% CORK

TODAY, SIR HENRY'S Pages 16/17



Trade union internal probe as €800k unaccounted for

Southside 'super park' meeting told Vernon Mount crucial



By KIERAN DINEEN

THE owners of the 18th-century Vernon Mount House in Frankfield are willing to engage with the council and refurbish the historic building — but only if a section of land could be set aside for commercial use. More than 50 people attended a meeting at the Rochestown Park Hotel last night organised by the Grange-Frankfield Partnership. The residents' group is calling on the council to move in and save the protected structure.

Olaf Maxwell, director of Vernon Mount House Restoration Ltd, owners of the property, said they were open to talks with the council about restoring the house, but only if 100,000 square feet of land were set aside for commercial use.

Ger Lehane, of the residents group, said this was "a non-runner" and the council must act now to save what is a protected structure.

The group is also calling on the city and county councils to embrace their idea of a pedestrian bridge linking Grange and Frankfield and the grounds of the historic house with the park planned for the former Kinsale Road landfill. Head Girl of Regina Mundi, Laura Locke, said a 'super park' would mean more students would cycle to school.

● See page six for more.

Laura Locke, Head Girl of Regina Mundi College, addressing the Grange-Frankfield Partnership meeting at the Rochestown Park Hotel last night. See page six.

Picture: Diane Cusack

AN INTERNAL investigation has been launched within a plasterers' union in Cork after it was revealed that €800,000 is unaccounted for.

Angry plasterers met in recent days to discuss the hole in the finances at the Cork branch of the Operative Plasterers & Allied Trades Society of Ireland (OPATSI).

The money was collected over a period of several years from members' fees.

It is used as a hardship fund to help union members who are out of work and struggling to pay bills.

Since the collapse of the construction sector, there is increased need to help tradesmen in financial difficulty.

No allegations of illegal wrongdoing have been made and it is still not clear if gardai will be asked to investigate.

The union branch was dissolved last April.

General secretary of the union Billy Wall travelled to Cork last week to meet the tradesmen. He said: "I can't get answers to my questions: where has the money gone?"

Mr Wall said some of the money was invested in tracker bonds and post office schemes.

By RONAN BAGNALL

But he said the Cork accounts were not audited.

"I have tried to find out whether these schemes were cashed in or where the investments are now. At this stage, we have not gone to gardai because I am still investigating the matter."

"But members are not happy and it is simply not good enough that we do not know where the money is," he said.

Mr Wall said the executive committee of the union had discovered "off balance" bank accounts, which were used to collect some of the fees from members.

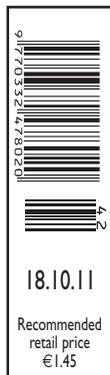
Members paid €7 a week to the union and it is estimated that there are around 245 members in Cork.

"We do not know if there are other bank accounts that were used. We can't get answers to these questions," he said.

Mr Wall said most of the money that had been built up in the branch coffers is now unaccounted for. It's estimated that this amounts to around €800,000.

The union is in the process of setting up a new Cork branch.

OPATSI is described as the oldest trade union in the State, tracing a history back to 1670.



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