

Vernon Mount could be a hub for tourism

By ANN MURPHY

THE notion of developing one of Cork's best known old houses as a tourist attraction has been raised at a lecture series which was launched last night.

Vernon Mount house is in the 99-hectare area being earmarked for the Tramore Valley Park masterplan, which covers the former Cork city landfill site, and the woodland area around the old Georgian house.

However, the house is in private hands and the local Grange Frankfield Partnership last night launched a lecture series at Douglas Library to highlight what a valuable asset the house could be to the local area if developed as part of the masterplan.

The house sits above the South Ring Road, across from the former city dump.

It is a listed building containing important murals by 18th century artist Nathaniel Grogan.

The Tramore Valley Park Masterplan was developed by architect firm Brady Shipman Martin.

Last night, the firm's David Bossonnet said the house could be the equivalent of Westport House in Mayo for Cork.

He said: "We drew up the masterplan for the Tramore Valley Park and Vernon Mount house is in the middle of it. It is falling into a state of disrepair.

"A protected structure like Vernon Mount could have a very good role to play in the masterplan — it could be the equivalent for example of Westport House, which has a wide range of activities going on in the grounds there."

The building is owned by US-based Jonathan Moss, who had been a director of a team which failed to secure planning permission for a residential and hotel development on the site.

Last night, Mr Bossonnet said that a café or restaurant at the location would also be a valuable attraction for the area.

However, nothing can be done without the support of the house's owner.

The Grange Frankfield Partnership is hoping the lecture series will raise awareness locally and highlight to the owner the value the house would have in the future of the area around the Tramore Valley Park.

The Vernon Mount Lecture Series is being supported by Cork City Library.

O'Leary aiming to take Euro seat for Sinn Féin

SINN FÉIN has a real chance of taking a European parliament seat in Ireland South, would-be candidate Chris O'Leary has said.

The Cork city councillor is one of two candidates to have already put their names forward ahead of a party selection convention on September 14 to chose the party's candidate for the 2014 European parliament elections.

The other is Muskerry-based Gaelgoir Liadh Ní Riada, daughter of famous composer Seán Ó Riada.

Party leader Gerry Adams appointed Ms Ní Riada as Sinn Féin's Irish language officer last year, and she currently works for the party in Leinster

Famous composer's daughter second candidate to signal interest

By RONAN BAGNALL

House. From Coolea, Ms Ní Riada has produced and directed numerous documentaries for RTÉ and TG4.

It will be the first time since 1994 that the party has had a contested selection convention for the EU nomination in the south of Ireland.

Nominations for candidates will close 72 hours in advance of the convention, so other candidates may still come forward.

Cllr O'Leary said he was confident that, whoever was selected, Sinn Féin could take a seat in the Ireland South constituency.

He said the public view of European politics as a "grave train" would be challenged by Sinn Féin.

He pointed to his own record of challenging spending waste in City Hall, saying:

"People should not be elected just to be on a grave train. My credentials on this have been set out at local government level. We want people to go to Europe who will challenge the whole austerity regime. We don't want people who take the attitude that they shouldn't rock the boat."

At the last European elections for Ireland South, Brian Crowley (FF) topped the poll, followed by Seán Kelly (FG)



Cork city councillor Chris O'Leary.

Picture: Richard Mills

and Alan Kelly (Lab).

Mr Kelly was later elected to the Dáil, forcing him to give up the European seat to his colleague Phil Prendergast.

The sitting MEPs are expected to seek to run again, and Fine Gael senator Deirdre Clune has already thrown her hat into the ring to get on the Fine Gael ticket with Mr Kelly.

Sinn Féin went with Kerry-based Toireasa Ferris in 2009 and she polled more first preference votes than Alan Kelly, but eventually lost out to Mr Kelly on transfers.

However, the election is likely to be shaped by the outcome of a constituency boundary review that is currently ongoing — a review that was necessary after Ireland lost one of its 12 European Parliament seats.

ROB GIVES €90,000,000 EUROMILLIONS THUMBS UP



World 50k walk gold medallist Rob Heffernan at the announcement yesterday at Irishtown Sports Stadium in Dublin that tonight's EuroMillions jackpot is an estimated €90 million.

Picture: Gareth Chaney Collins

We're still boozers: Alcohol spend rises despite recession

PEOPLE in Ireland are spending more money on alcohol despite the chronic financial crisis that continues to grip the nation, newly-released official figures have revealed.

While many reined in their spending on things like clothing, transport and communication last year, people were less thrifty with booze.

Figures from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) showed around 6.36 billion euro (£5.44 billion) was spent on alcohol — up 1.2% from the year before.

That accounted for around 7.7% of total personal expenditure of €82.63 billion on goods and services.

While spending on alcohol, as calculated by the CSO at current market prices, increased each year from 2009, spending on tobacco was down in 2012.

It dropped by 2.4% from €2.2 billion in 2011 to €2.14 billion last year.

The CSO report on National Income and Expenditure 2012 showed total personal expenditure in 2012 was €105.69 billion.

Taxes on personal income and wealth of around €23.06 billion

accounted for just over a fifth of that.

The remainder was spent on everything from food, beverages and tobacco, to clothing and footwear; housing, fuel and power; to transport and communication; recreation, entertainment and education, to household equipment and miscellaneous goods and services such as medical products — around €4.25 billion.

While personal spending on goods and services rose slightly each year from 2009 to €82.63 in 2012, it remained significantly lower than its most recent height of €94.16 billion in 2008, before the country was plunged into crippling recession.

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) figures revealed overall growth in the Irish economy, with gross domestic product (GDP) at current market prices up 0.8% from 2011 to 2012.

In constant prices, GDP — the value of all goods and services in the economy — grew by 0.2% between 2011 and 2012.

The gross national product (GNP) of the country was higher by 1.8%.