

East Cork Journal

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The night East Cork stood still

ON Friday afternoon last, March 5th, a traffic accident occurred at Whitewell Cross, just past Saleen on the Whitegate Road. While emergency services rushed to the scene (coming to the aid of the six people - four from East Cork - involved) roads across the area became gridlocked, with some commuters spending more than two hours on the road to get from Middleton to Cloyne.

Thankfully, no one was killed in the accident, but a female occupant of one of the cars taken to CUH where her condition was described as 'stable.'

The accident occurred at around 3.45pm at the crossroad itself, but it was after 9 o'clock that night before the road was reopened to traffic, as a forensic examination had to be carried out at the scene.

While emergency service vehicles made their way unhindered to the accident, for those returning from work on an otherwise normal Friday evening, it was a different story altogether.

Gardaí directed traffic at the crossroads in Cloyne village, but many found themselves unable to follow diversion signs. HGVs were sent along boreens and, without a one-way system in place, farmers were called to open their gates to stricken trucks, when oncoming traffic could not pass by.

On the Barrakilla boreen, a jack-knifed tractor and trailer caused severe problems for traffic, causing many vehicles to have to three-

point (or in this instance, ten-point) turn and return the way they came. Another boreen (on the road from Cloyne to Whitewell Cross), sign-posted by a single bollard by 8pm that night, bore the brunt of diverted traffic, trying to get to Aghada and Whitegate, but this narrow road proved a navigational nightmare for many motorists - in one instance four cars had to back 400 yards down the road, to allow a tractor to pass.

Cloyne shopkeepers were confronted with lost truck drivers well into the evening, desperately trying to get back to Middleton or on to Whitegate - having been on the road for three or four hours.

A bus that was stopped in Saleen unloaded passengers who opted to walk home rather than wait to travel on.

The East Cork Journal, trying to get home, was asked by several passing motorists how to get to one locale or another, with one woman (in an SUV with three children in the back) stating, 'Are you kidding me?' when informed that one road was now impossible to travel due to the jack-knifed tractor trailer.

The evening's priority was, of course, rescuing those involved in the accident at Whitewell Cross but, for many others, a futile evening was spent on the roads around Cloyne.

'We're going nowhere,' was the succinct comment from one van driver. Hundreds agreed.

Watergrasshill residents fears for 'priceless' aquifer lead them to Brussels



WATERGRASSHILL residents vehemently expressed their opposition to claimed breaches of European legislation, by visiting the European Commission's Petitions Committee in Brussels late last month.

The committee, made up of a number of MEPs, heard how the residents objected to the decision, by Cork County Council, to permit quarrying over a regionally-important aquifer, an underground, permeable layer of rock that carries water.

Barry Curtin, a member of the Watergrasshill Community Association (WCA) told the East Cork Journal, 'This aquifer has been filtering the town's water for years. The removal of this rock could lead to significant pollution of our water and, in permitting the quarry to operate in this area, Cork County Council are, effectively, allowing the water to be polluted.'

The reception garnered by the WCA in Brussels was positive, with Barry commenting, 'It's satisfying that the Commission will investigate our case. We've had four hydro-geological re-

ports carried out in the area now. It's not just people in the immediate area who could be affected by this, but more than 50,000 living in the surrounding region.'

Support for this opposition has been provided by MEP Sean Kelly (FG), who expressed his dismay at the Minister for the Environment's failure to respond to queries posed by the WCA.

'The council are prepared to forfeit the spring for the sake of quarrying the ground,' Barry Curtin continues, 'There aren't many places left in Ireland where you can put your hand down and take a drop of water. It's priceless.'

It's now up to the commission to come to a conclusion regarding Watergrasshill's precious aquifer otherwise it may become a case of 'Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink



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