

- **An Tánaiste, Mary Coughlin, C.E.O., Mrs. Kane distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all of you and thank you for being with us to celebrate ‘a good new story’ for the Abbey Voc School, for local community and for Tir Chonaill Athletics Club**
- **Four years ago representatives from over thirty local and regional sports and recreational groups met in this room. The meeting was led and chaired by the then Principal of the AVS, Mrs. Mary Anne Kane.**
- **A ‘needs analysis’ carried out in the previous six months and presented on the night highlighted the requirements of the school and the community. All groups expressed the need for an inclusive sports and recreation facility that could be used all year round - that could facilitate all age groups, all abilities, the recreational walker, an elite athlete, the games player, the paralympic and the special Olympic participant. A detailed development plan, proposed on that night and costed at €500.00 I’m delighted to report, has now been delivered on.**
- **To bring this project to its present state there was a number of partners and partnerships that worked in harmony and supported each other.**
- **I would like to thank Donegal VEC and recognise the leadership and support of Mr Sean O’Longain, current CEO Mary Anne Kane, current school Principal Emmanuel Mc Cormack for their work, behind the scenes, ensuring that the project has come to fruition. I was also like to acknowledge the outstanding work and vision of the past management of this school who had the drive to purchase and develop the initial site over twenty years ago and develop sport and recreational facilities – in particular I speak of Mr J.J. Harvey and Mr Oliver Plunkett.**
- **This school, over the years, has been fortunate to have supportive and progressive parents associations. In the past various associations have been responsible for developing the original sports and recreational facilities that have served the school population and wider community so well over the past two decades. Recent parents associations under the leadership of Frank McDaid, Angela O’Kennedy, Maureen McCartney and current Chair Kieran Keeney continue to play a vital role and I would like to acknowledge their contribution in the development about to be opened here tonight.**
- **As a member of the third partner, Tir Chonaill Athletics club, it’s with a great sense of pride and achievement that I applaud the development of this new multi sport facility. Tir Chonaill, an inclusive club with over 300 members caters for all ages, abilities and interests. We have in our ranks groups of young athletes that train weekly here in Donegal Town, in Ballyshannon and Bundoran. The club supports and leads fit4life groups that**

come together weekly at various locations in Sth Donegal. We have the recreational athlete, National champions and International athletes in our ranks. The club was recognised last year when it received the prestigious national award of Club of the Year. The women's track and field team were once again crowned Irish League winners in 2009 and will shortly travel to Switzerland as Ireland's representatives in the European clubs cup.

- The inclusion and support for paralympic and special Olympic athletes is also part of the clubs mission. We are delighted with the increasing numbers of paralympic and special Olympians now using the coaching expertise and facilities in our club. I would like to pay a special tribute to the club administrators and coaches who weekly – administer, organise and coach within the club. The addition of this new facility will make the clubs work a lot easier and even more rewarding.**

- During the last four years on top of running and developing a very successful athletics club a number of members also found time to lead on this new development. I would like to acknowledge the huge contribution the following have made over the last five years**
- David Doherty – he coaches three times a week in the club He is a driving force in all areas and aspects of the development. His contribution has been unquantifiable.**
- Richard McCarthy, elite master athlete, coaches weekly in the club. The development of this new facility is a credit to his professional expertise. I would also like to thank his employer McMullan Associates for their support for this project.**
- Paul O’Gara is our current club chairman. Your drive, practical help and advice has been a most important part in this fine development.**
- Five years ago the club set up a financial sub committee who were tasked with addressing the funding of the project. A vary special thanks to Mary Doherty, Pauline O’Gara and Angela O’Kennedy who via leadership, planning and drive a number of initiatives have realised over €120,000 during the period.**
- I would also like to recognise and thank Mirian McCartney and Ciaran Murphy for valuable legal and financial advice.**
- Graham Stevens, representing the Contractors, Sports Surfaces Ireland Ltd, is with us tonight. I would like to express thanks for congratulations for a job well done**

During the last four years club members lobbied and knocked on many doors and found some closed and a lot more open.

- **The first door we found wide open was that of Tanaiste Mary Coughlin. She supported and in turn lobbied for the project. Two grants from Arts Sports and Tourism of €270,000 was secured very early on. Tánaiste we thank you for you helping us secure this funding and wish you well in your new portfolio announced two days ago.**
- **The second door we knocked upon was that of Donegal Co Council. I would like to acknowledge the part played by all local Co Councillors in securing,, two years ago, an initial grant of 14.000euro and a very welcome allocation of 8,000euro announced two days ago. I also would like to acknowledge the contributions made by all local Councillors from their member's funds. The advice of and support received from Gary Martin and Barney Mc Laughlin in the council offices I would also like to acknowledge**
- **The third door that was wide open and supportive was that of the Abbey Voc S chool Parents Association Parents. Their contribution via a number of fundraising activities during the past four years amounts to nearly 20,000 euro**
- **The fourth door that was opened to us was that of Athletics Ireland and -- I'm delighted the President of the Association Mr Liam Hennessey is with us tonight. The contribution of €10,000 towards equipping the facility is certainly appreciated**
- **The final and most important door that was opened to the club was that of our trustees. Four years ago they agreed to go guarantor for a loan of 250.00euro. I'm delighted that we have repaid their faith in us – thanks to our trustees Patricia Britton, Seamus Og Campbell, Paul O'Gara, David Doherty, Angela O'Kennedy, Adrian Ruane and Eamon Harvey**
- **The project discussed and agreed at a meeting here four years ago has been completed under budget. It is a credit to so many partners who have planned, developed and delivered 'A GOOD NEWS STORY' to this community**

Thanks you