

## What we have and What we need

“Sure there’s nothing in Waterford.” Rubbish. “Politicians, sure there all useless.” Rubbish. “Kilkenny gets everything.” Rubbish. “They hate us up in Dublin.” Rubbish.

If you, I or anyone else chooses to sit on the sideline, text in radio programmes and in so doing make all kinds of unfounded, baseless statements about what Waterford doesn’t have, and remains committed to such a line, what purpose does such a standpoint serve?

Will such a view help to solve a wider social problem? Will such a view stumble upon a remedy to our economic ills? Will such a view persuade a foreign investor that this spectacular county of ours and historical city, is a place worth throwing a few bob at? Do I really need to answer any of these questions for you?

So I considered all of the above in terms of haves and have nots, starting with what have.

In no particular order, Waterford has arguably the best farmed and fed dairy herd in the world, producing global-leading produce.

Waterford possess a top-class Institute of Technology that would benefit from less political interference if it is to further flourish, and is home to the superb TSSG wing and the ground-breaking MPRG project, led by my old schoolmate, Professor John Nolan.

Waterford is home to the best Museum offering in Ireland at the heart of a rejuvenated ancient city centre (House of Waterford Crystal, Viking Triangle, the born again Cathedral Square). Waterford is home to a deepening pharma/life sciences hub which is creating high-end, sustainable employment, and also offering the prospect of further collaborations with WIT.

Waterford is home to beautiful Tramore, whose renaissance we highlight in this week’s edition through the opening of the National Lifeguard Training Centre.

But consider too the other developments along the Lower Prom and the works completed on the Crooked Path, the Doneraile, the Inclusion Park, the new Ard Scoil Na Mara and the sales of multiple commercial properties in the town centre.

Waterford is home to food, literary and cultural festivals including Immráma, Comeraghs Wild, Spraoi, Imagine, the Harvest Festival and West Waterford Food Festival.

Waterford is home to some of the country’s best walking trails: the Comeraghs, the Nire, the Knockmealdowns, the Dunmore East Cliff Walk, etc, and before too long, we’ll be able to cycle freely between Abbeyside and Bilberry on the Deise Greenway.

Waterford is home to the Heritage Town of Lismore and our vibrant county town Dungarvan, which has never looked better. Waterford is steeped in history, and the country houses of Curraghmore. Mount Congreve and Dromana retain special places in the affections of many.

Waterford is the home of the Blaa. Waterford is the home of red lead. Waterford is the home of the large bottle.

Waterford is the home of the Blues, the Deise, Kelly Proper, John O’Shea, Austin Gleeson, Jack O’Donoghue, Henry De Bromhead, Thomas Barr, Niamh Briggs, Daryl Murphy, Kevin Phelan and so many more outstanding sportsmen and women. Achievers. Winners. Champions. People we can all look up to and take pride in.

Waterford is the home of the magnificent Theatre Royal, Garter Lane and Central Hall. Waterford is home to a reborn city Musical Society. Waterford is home to the still thriving Portlaoigh Musical Society, now 35 years young and looking good on it.

Waterford is home to TV production company Nemeton, located in the heart of An Rinn and long may their “sár obair” continue. Waterford is home to Ireland’s oldest city, albeit now, sadly, without a standalone Mayor, but we remain a city, and we need to remind those beyond the Suir and Blackwater of that fact.

Waterford city is now, in as much as is humanly possible, free from the risk of flooding and if you live in Bath Street or Poleberry, that counts for as hell of a lot.

So what do we need?

Waterford needs shorter dole queues, and that means the delivery of higher end jobs, which would incentivise more to remain and progress in education, but at least the IDA have trained an eye in our direction at long last, which has to be welcomed.

Waterford needs a standalone University and not some quick fix, forced academic marriage which, one fears the Government might force upon us between now and the pending plebiscite.

Waterford needs the provision of 24/7 cardiac care at UHW and greater palliative care provision (that Waterford Hospice still has millions to raise when it comes to the provision of such a facility is wholly unjust).

Waterford needs a runway extension at its Airport, which, perhaps, should be rebranded as Ireland South East; the name change certainly didn’t do Knock any harm now, did it?

Waterford needs a reduced toll on the TF Meagher Bridge and a flat €1 per hour charge for city centre street parking, even on a six-month trial basis, to see if that can encourage more people into the city to shop.

Waterford needs a south bank train terminus linking up with the bus station. Pumping further money into Plunkett Station, on the side of the Suir that remains unprotected from flooding, doesn’t make a great deal of sense to me.

Waterford needs greater Garda numbers to crack down on criminality and anti-social behaviour. Waterford needs an investor to put the Ard Ri and North Wharf sites to good use, likewise for the old Tannery site in Portlaoigh and the Waterford Crystal site in Dungarvan.

Both Waterford and Kilkenny need a playground in Ferrybank and retail tenants in the Ferrybank Shopping Centre. Waterford needs the Michael Street redevelopment.

Could things be better? Of course they could. But we’ve all got to do our bit on that front too. Waterford is a great city and county, so let’s tell as many people as loudly and clearly we can about it.