

Mystery of the New Paving

Questions are being asked in Westport on why a stretch of pavement has been ripped up and relayed around the Fairgreen, close to Westport Garda Station.

The paving has been taken up over the past two weeks, and a new decorative surface was put down in its place. However, locals say that the existing paving was in fine condition, and there are much worse

sections of paving around the town.

Locals also reported that the paving that was removed was placed carefully on pallets and taken away, and they wonder where this paving might be gone to.

It certainly is strange to see a cash-strapped local authority replacing perfectly acceptable paving, when there are so many more important projects that demand funding.



Pictured above: The newly laid paving around Westport's Fairgreen, which locals say was in a acceptable state before works began. Below: A stretch of paving at the nearby bus-stop is badly in need of repair.



Turf Cutting On All Bogs to Continue in 2009

There is considerable confusion among those who rely on turf supplies as to how plentiful the fuel will be in future years.

There has been much discussion over the phasing out of domestic turf cutting on foot of an EU directive. The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, John Gormley recently announced that he is putting in place a consultative process to prepare for the phasing out of domestic turf cutting, and stated that cutting on all bogs during 2009 will be allowed to continue as before.

However, many fear that they will eventually be barred from cutting turf on their local bog, like it has been done for generations. What isn't commonly known is that the proposed ban on cutting turf is that it won't affect

the vast majority of bogs in Mayo. Currently the proposals are to stem the harvesting of peat from raised bogs, of which there are very few in Mayo. These are mostly situated in the midlands, and are becoming increasingly rare. Raised bogs are dome-shaped bogs which have developed in former lake basins. Their nutrient supply is obtained from rainfall, and their acreage has been drastically reduced in recent years through turf cutting, peat harvesting for the horticulture industry and development.

Whilst there may be moves to curtail turf cutting on the much more common blanket bogs in the future, this will most likely be done through the government purchasing large tracts of land,

or with a generous compensation. Again it is unlikely to affect the majority of bogs in Mayo, and won't come into place in the near future. It will probably only restrict the cutting of turf by machine, and will apply to Special Areas of Conservation first.

Farming families are concerned that as fuel prices rise, they will be forced to rely more on turf for home heating. Heating oil prices rose drastically in 2008, before falling again in price as the world economic crisis took hold. Many of these families are worrying unduly, as their supply of turf will continue for many years into the future.

So those of you who love that romantic smell of burning turf, or just appreciate saving a fortune on oil can look forward to many more years of enjoyment.



Martin Ruddy from Doolough pictured clearing the scraw in preparation for cutting turf by hand, in the traditional way it has been done for generations, with the beautiful Broadhaven Bay in the background.