

# Helping St Mary's on the ground

## FAMILIES JOIN BEAUFORT FACILITY ST MARY OF THE ANGELS TO TAKE CHARGE OF FUTURE OF ITS GROUNDS

By DÓNAL NOLAN

FAMILIES of residents of St Mary of the Angels (SMOA) in Beaufort are taking charge of the entire future of the centre's expansive grounds in what has been welcomed as at least one positive outcome of the controversy raging around plans to move residents into the wider community.

The SMOA Relatives' Association is now steering a project to completely rejuvenate the appearance of the care centre alongside its St John of God management that is already seeing workers on site cutting back foliage.

"We put a proposal to management to tackle the appearance of the grounds of St Mary's

and when that was accepted set about getting Rural Social Scheme workers in with the help of the South Kerry Development Partnership," Chairman of the Relatives' Association Jack Fitzpatrick told The Kerryman.

"The grounds had deteriorated in recent years and we decided to tackle it all to help out management and make St Mary's an even better environment."

A landscaper is currently drawing up a new plan for the grounds that will involve extensive planting and the Relatives' Association also hope to begin painting the buildings there very shortly.

Mr Fitzpatrick said the goodwill of the RSS workers now



Donie O'Sullivan SKDP Board member and Jack Fitzpatrick Chairman St Mary of the Angels Parents Group (left) with RSS and TUS James O'Sullivan, Matt Murphy, Mike Tuohy, Mike Griffin, Daniel O'Sullivan, Mike O'Shea and John Doherty cleaning and planting the gardens and painting the premises at St Mary of the Angels, Beaufort. Photo by Michelle Cooper Galvin

clearing growth there is indicative of the widescale public support families of residents achieved since the controversy broke.

"The workers are mostly farmers with no personal connection themselves to St Mary's but they're treating it as if they are doing the work for themselves."

The Relatives' Association was meanwhile to meet with HSE South Manager Ger

Reaney on Wednesday in its continued campaign to get the HSE to exempt St Mary's from the national policy of decongregating care homes of its kind.

They were to present a number of proposals to Mr Reaney they believe would be of mutual benefit for both residents and HSE, but would not be drawn on the specifics of these ahead of the meeting.

However, The Kerryman understands that if the proposals

are accepted it would see SMOA remain open indefinitely.

Last week Taoiseach Enda Kenny was drawn into debate on the issue in the Dáil, reaffirming the State stance that there would be no 'imminent closure' of the facility.

Mr Fitzpatrick was critical of the statement: "In his speech An Taoiseach cited Minister's McGrath's constituency as an example of where de-congregation was a complete success.

"Mr McGrath said some time ago that he can go from one end of his electoral area to the other end in 20 minutes, which means that the people that moved out of the home in his area can get every possible service they may require in 10 to 15 minutes. How could anybody claim that the same applies to Kerry?" The Relatives' Association will meanwhile meet families to inform them of the progress at Wednesday's meeting.