

Plan Ireland 2040

Historically, the profits generated in the businesses of Abbeyfeale by the business people were re-invested in the local economy. Local business people expanded their businesses in the area and started new businesses, thus helping the town expand and creating more jobs. For example, the Mann family, whose parents owned a grocery, now run a bar, a childrens' clothes shop, a hairdressers and a boutique. Mr. Pádraig Fitzgerald, who began his business career with a fast food outlet, purchased and developed premises as a Chinese restaurant, along with a pizza restaurant, a pub and a betting office. All these businesses are providing employment in the town and are also attracting customers to the town.

But this kind of investment is no longer taking place as the two major retailers in town now, have no connection to the area and will never re-invest their profits generated in Abbeyfeale back into the local economy.

We cannot turn back the clock, but right now we should place an embargo on allowing any of the multiple group supermarkets from opening an outlet on towns of a population of less than 5000 people, as it has been shown that in smaller towns, these large outlets wipe out local small shops.

Many small towns have passed the tipping point and will now slowly lose the services of banks, restaurants and shops.

Equally, many towns can still be saved. This can only happen with the intervention of state agencies. Abbeyfeale is well located, on a national primary route, one hour's drive from Shannon International Airport. The town has good schools, social clubs, sporting facilities and shops. It is a wonderful place in which to live, close to beaches and tourist attractions. But all of that will disappear without investment.

If the state follows the correct policy of promoting towns like ours, by supporting new businesses with tax and other incentives, with the co-operation of our local community council, we can and will deliver prosperity once again to Abbeyfeale.

James Harnett