

Call for State funding to keep rail service on track

RAIL users face delays to their InterCity services in the coming months and years if the Government does not stump up cash the service needs to survive, it has been claimed.

Sources at Irish Rail's parent company, CIE, last night warned speed restrictions are likely to be commonplace because the company is struggling to afford to maintain its tracks.

The warning comes after newspaper reports - since denied - that the cash-strapped company had 'earmarked' routes for closure if a massive funding shortfall was not met.

Sources say it is 'just a matter of time' before delays of around 10 or 20 minutes start

By **Neil Michael**
Southern Correspondent

being introduced at sections of InterCity lines.

Money was recently found to upgrade ageing tracks on the Dublin to Cork route. Irish Rail also needs money to replace ageing signalling centres.

Without them, the network can't operate, sources said.

The 100-year-old system used in Limerick, for example, had to be completely replaced at a cost of more than €6million earlier this year because it had reached the end of its life. Money for it had to be diverted from other projects the company wished to complete.

The Irish Daily Mail understands other signalling systems are in a similar state, with Kilkenny and Cork being the two most in need of replacement.

Irish Rail was unavailable for comment on the state of its signalling systems and rail lines.

But in the 2016 Rail Review Report, the National Transport Authority pointed out that last year, funding for maintenance of the Irish Rail network increased from €247million a year in 2011 to €276million.

'This unsustainable level of funding has resulted in the ongoing deterioration of the infrastructure asset, giving rise to increased safety risks,' the NTA stated.

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

All you need is love... and silence helps

THE basic therapy is love. Love is the imperial medicine for any illness or disorder.' Those are the words of Fr Gabriel Mejia, a Colombian priest who has dedicated his life to saving what he calls 'the disposable ones'. The 'disposable ones' are children abandoned to the streets, destitute, exhausted and often near death.

In his sanctuaries of light, Fr Mejia provides these children with food, care and education.

Those are things they need, but what they desire more than anything is love. In love, they learn how to live again.

It doesn't stop there. Fr Mejia believes they must also learn how to love, how to fill their lives with the pulse of God. That is why he teaches them meditation.

'When a child closes his eyes and begins to meditate, they open themselves to the field of all possibilities... The world opens for the child. And then the child discovers their essential nature - which is love.' To witness young lives being delivered from despair to love is beyond beauty.

Fr Mejia is one of many spiritual and secular leaders who are convinced that silence is the antidote to misery and the key to a life of love. Another is Noel Keating, a retired teacher who devotes his life to giving Irish schoolchildren the gift of silent contemplation.

'It was the first time in my life', he told me recently, 'that I felt called.' Noel's 'calling' was inspired by Irish mystic monk Fr John Main.

Before his death in 1982, Fr John wrote that the 'basic power, out of which we are invited to live our own lives vitally, is love'. Again, this is something that can only be truly experienced in a deep silence 'that brings each of us wholly into the gift of our own being'.

As it happens, Noel and I are involved in a conference on John Main at Trinity College, on September 15-16. Before becoming a Benedictine monk, Fr John was both a student and professor of law at Trinity. Later, he found his calling as an evangelist of silence.

In 2012, Noel began a pilot project to promote the practice of silent contemplation in primary schools. To date, he and his team have introduced the practice to more than a hundred schools around the country. As a result, 25,000 Irish children have received the gift of

their own being. Silence leads to love. This is a truth understood by all great mystics of the Christian tradition. Only when we can move beyond distraction to focus on the other, can we discover the meaning of love.

Love is essentially about paying attention. You pay attention to your beloved as she expresses her fears, hopes and dreams. You pay attention to your children as they seek guidance and reassurance.

What friendship can survive a lack of attention? And yet, in our age of digital mania, we have never been more distracted. Is this why the fragile bonds that hold us together are breaking apart?

Children are particularly susceptible to an attention deficit. Their world is dominated by gadgets and games that undermine concentration, and that rob them of their natural curiosity for what lies beyond the screen. People like Fr Mejia and Noel Keating realise that in this, as in all things, love is the imperial medicine.

Love is not something that can be taught. It is not a theory that can be mastered. It is the energy of the heart, the spring of life that flows from each soul. In the silence, that energy is released and the spring becomes an ocean.

Across the globe, children are being redeemed from misery and distraction simply by sitting still. They are touching something deep within themselves which is transforming how they live. They are learning how to love by discovering their own essential nature.

IN the peace that surpasses all understanding, these little ones are experiencing something that we all need. It is what the saints and sages have spoken of down the ages. It is an experience of what Fr John called the 'limitless expanse of love'.

And the results are remarkable: concentration and grades have improved; behavioural difficulties have decreased and a new spirit of peace is present. Students have become less confrontational, more caring and happy.

In the experience of silence, they have received the 'basic therapy'. They have savoured the 'imperial medicine' and have become who they truly are - people 'rooted and founded in love'.

■ *John Main: A Hunger for Depth and Meaning' will take place at Trinity College Dublin, on September 15-16. Tickets available online at www.eventbrite.ie*

—mark.dooley@dailymail.ie—



Be a Hero today.

Woodie's 'Heroes' with MayKay Charity Single CD is available in all Woodie's stores and for download. Donate what you can in store or on woodies.ie











100% of all donations in store will be split evenly across Make-A-Wish Ireland, Temple Street Foundation, Jack and Jill Foundation and ACT for Meningitis. Thank you to our valued suppliers Dulux, PPG, Contech (Tec 7), McLoughlin's, Excel Industries, Ronseal, BabySkip, IQ Group, Rothco, Principle and Mindshare for both the cash support and free services provided to bring the campaign to life. Woodie's are also contributing financially to this campaign along with a month of dedicated colleague time and support. This means that every cent donated by you will go directly to the four charities.