

**Minutes of April Meeting of the Municipal District of Callan-Thomastown**

**Date:** Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> April, 2024 at 4.00p.m.

**Venue:** Callan Area Office

**Chair:** Cllr D Cullen

**Present:** Cllr Patrick O'Neill, Cllr Matt Doran, Cllr Michael Doyle, Cllr Joe Lyons

**In attendance:** Fiona Deegan, Director of Services; Anne Marie Shortall, Meetings Administrator; Mr Declan Murphy, Area Engineer; Mr Frank Stafford A/ Senior Engineer, Project Office; Mr Thomas Dillion, Project Office; Ms Carmel Brett, Staff Officer.

**Apologies:** Cllr Peter Chap Cleere

1) **Confirmation of Minutes**

**Minutes of the Municipal District meeting of Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024.**

The minutes of the March meeting of the Municipal District held on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024 were adopted, proposed by Cllr Matt Doran and seconded by Cllr Michael Doyle.

2) **Consideration of Reports ad Recommendations**

(I) **Bennettsbridge Riverside Amenity Area & Pedestrian Bridge Feasibility Study & Design Options Report**

Frank Stafford made a presentation on 3 possible options for an amenity area and river crossing at Bennettsbridge. He noted Kilgallen Consulting Engineers were commissioned to undertake this Study. The meeting was advised that following this study Option 3 emerged as the preferred option having assessed all the various constraints.

Under Option 3 a free-standing pedestrian / cycle bridge was proposed upstream of the existing bridge with a riverside amenity space on the western riverbank which provided for river access via pontoons, a drop-off area for watercraft, parking, a new access to the R700, welfare facilities and landscaping. Mr. Stafford advised that proposals were at a very early stage and planning consent would be challenging giving the site was within a SAC, SPA, floodplain and within close proximity to the existing stone arch bridge which is listed on the NIHA of Regional importance. Mr. Stafford also noted that initial discussions with the landowners affected by Option 3 were positive. He concluded that the next step would be to identify a potential funding stream to advance the project to planning and design stage, but cautioned the project was at a very early stage.

Cllr Cullen thanked Frank Stafford, KLP and Kilgallen's for their support in progressing the study. Cllr Cullen highlighted that the River is currently underutilized with a small slip for canoes. Castlecomer was an example of where a pedestrian bridge across a river can be achieved.

Cllr O'Neill also thanked Frank Stafford and that future generations can have the benefit of the river as per previous generations.

**(ii) Nore Valley Linkage – Bennettsbridge to Thomastown**

Frank Stafford updated the Members on the feasibility and route selection report recently concluded by Tobin's Consulting Engineers. The members were advised that this was a collaborative project undertaken by the Council, KLP and Trail Kilkenny.

The Members were advised the advancement of this project was dependent on permissive consent from the landowners who's land the trail would transverse as was the case with the existing other two sections of the walk from Kilkenny City to Bennettsbridge and Thomastown to Inistioge.

The members were advised that 4 route options were explored. Route 1 followed the western bank of the river over the entire study area, running through the grounds of Mount Juliet Estate. Route 2 followed the eastern bank of the river as far as Knockanroe, diverting away from the river east of Ballylinch Stud. Route 3, a variation on the previously assessed 2011 route, but with on-road sections moved into adjacent fields and Route 4 running parallel to, or in the general area of, the Dublin to Waterford railway line. Initially both sides of the River Nore were assessed but proved challenging in terms of obtaining the necessary consents and that on completion of a standardised multi-criteria analysis Route 4 emerged as the preferred route. Mr. Stafford thanked Cllr. Pat O'Neill, in his capacity as board member with Trail Kilkenny, for his significant input and liaison with landowners along Route 4, noting that 29 out of the 30 landowners had signaled a willingness to engage.

Mr. Stafford concluded by saying that Trail Kilkenny would now seek to have all landowners, along Route 4 sign a permissive consent form and that subject to the outcome of process that planning could be sought for this project under Part 8 of the Planning & Development Act.

**(iii) Callan Heritage Trail**

Thomas Dillion made a presentation on the new Callan heritage trail. Kilkenny Co Co were approached by the Callan Heritage Society to develop same. Kilkenny Leader Partnership provided the funding for the project.

Abarta Heritage were commissioned to deliver the design with 12 keys points of interest.

Signiatec manufactured and installed the signage.

Cllr Doran acknowledged Callan Macra Na Feirme and their great energy for the town and project.

Cllr Lyons acknowledge that this was a great asset to Callan, couldn't have done the project without Callan Heritage. He thanked landowners and Callan Macra.

**(iv) Monthly Roads Update (Declan Murphy)**

Mr. Declan Murphy, Area Engineer, updated the members on the following roads related matters saying:

- Restoration Improvement works for April / Early May
- New Bus shelter in Ballyhale
- 2 number ORIS projects in Callan and Kells
- Recent Rainfall emergency works

The members thanked Mr. Murphy for his update and raised the following items:

- Cllr Cullen thanked the Area Staff for works at Ballyhale junction heading towards Kiltorcan.
- Cllr Cullen asked about flooding in Thomastown, are culverts at capacity, any further information on this?
- Rock fall update on Millstreet Thomastown
- Cllr Lyons enquired, can all grass be cut completely in Abbey Meadow? Used to be Pitch and Putt court there.
- Cllr O'Neill enquired on the latest Thomastown flooding issues. He stated that nothing is being achieved. Flooding is a major issue which affects so many people, yet complete lack of movement on it.
- Cllr Doyle supported Cllr O'Neill on his views, have done as much as we can with regards communicating with the Department, he stated everything is being protected except people.
- Cllr Doyle raised a flooding issue at roundabout at Graiguenamanagh flooding.
- Cllr Doran raised the issue with flooding, resulting in damage to roads. Requested that we get the patcher back in the Area. Need emergency plan to get funding for repairs. Rogerstown to Ballytobin edges collapsed completely needs immediate attention.

Mr. Murphy stated that the recent flooding was a unique set of occurrences, rivers didn't break their banks, purely surface water which came off land, culvert at ladywell open, then it goes underground, couldn't take volume of water.

- Cllr Doran raised flooding issues on the R713
- Cllr Doyle suggested writing to Minister Eamon Ryan and ask for extra funding for road repairs.
- Cllr Cullen seconded this.
- Mr. Murphy stated in the Years of severe weather 2015/2016 we got extra funding for drainage works.

#### **(v) Monthly Rural Development Update**

Anne Marie Shortall updated the Members on the monthly Rural Development

- The Community and Cultural Facilities Capital Scheme (CCFCS) now open, advertised, Closing Date 10<sup>th</sup> May for nonprofit organizations.
- Commercial paint Scheme closing date 3<sup>rd</sup> May 50% grant funded- more details in grant handbook.
- Community Events grants closed, list going to Kilkenny County Council full meeting in May.

- County Heritage grant €37.5k
- €84m Community Recognition Fund announced Nationally. A call will be sent out to Community Groups in areas which will be eligible.
- Cllr Lyons asked if CCTV in the Callan area could be applied for.

Next meeting changed to Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> May in Thomastown at 4pm.

**(III) Business prescribed by Statute, Standing Orders or Resolution of the Municipal District members for transaction of such meeting.**

There were no items for discussion.

**(IV) Other Business set forth in the Notice convening the meeting**

There were no items for discussion

**(V) Notices of Motion**

There were items for discussion.

**(VI) Any other Business**

There were no items for discussion.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Chairperson 