

***Minutes of Special Meeting of the Municipal District of Piltown held
Wednesday, 11th July, 2019 at 9.30am at the Ferrybank Area Office***

Present: Cllr. Eamon Aylward, Cathaoirleach
Cllrs. F. Doherty, P. Dunphy, G. Frisby and T. Breathnach

In attendance: S. McKeown, Director of Services, B. Tyrrell, Meetings Administrator and O. Bannon, Staff Officer

1. Consideration of request to Coras Iompair Eireann (CIE) and Irish Rail (IR) to declare their intention to abandon that section of the disused Waterford/New Ross railway line within the functional area of the Piltown Municipal District.

As agreed at the Piltown Municipal District Meeting held on 3rd July, this special meeting of the PMD was arranged to discuss the proposal to request Coras Iompair Eireann (CIE) / Irish Rail (IR) to abandon the disused railway line for the Kilkenny Greenway development. It was agreed that prior to making a decision on this proposal, the following issues would be examined and discussed:

1. Waterford Greenway

It was confirmed that the Waterford Greenway was constructed on an abandoned railway line.

2. Licence Agreement with CIE/IR

While CIE/IR have agreed in principal from the outset to licence the disused railway line, they have not provided heads of agreement for same. The position of CIE/IR has been to await confirmation of funding for the project before initiating negotiations with the 3 local authorities. Now that funding has been secured for the project, the option arises to also consider the abandonment of the line. It was noted that this will provide the local authorities with greater flexibility and control in relation to the development and operation of the Greenway.

3. Cost and financing of the Greenway

The total cost of constructing the Greenway is estimated at €13.5m, with €8m in grant aid being confirmed. The detailed design will be completed by the end of the year, at which point there will be a clearer estimate of the costs involved, following which the three local authorities will agree a fair appropriation of the balance of finance required to deliver the Greenway relative to the benefits accruing.

4. Effect of the recent funding announcement for Waterford of €2.5m

This funding relates to an extension of the Waterford Greenway at Bilberry to the Viking triangle in Waterford City Centre. The sustainable transport bridge being constructed as part of the North Quays SDZ development will create a link from the Kilkenny Greenway at Ferrybank to the Waterford greenway. This in turn will create a continuous Greenway of c76km from New Ross, through South Kilkenny and on to Dungarvan.

5. Abandonment process versus Lease Negotiation process

It was noted that CIE/IR have indicated that both processes are likely to be of a similar timescale, c5-6 months. The three local authorities must agree 'en bloc' which of the 2 options they wish to proceed with. Once that is confirmed, negotiations can commence with CIE/IR to agree the terms of either the licence agreement or the abandonment. CIE/IR are favourably disposed to either option, however, they have stipulated that the entire railway line must be treated as a single entity and whichever option is agreed will apply to the entire line. It was noted that in the case of an abandonment order, CIE/IR would be required by law to publicly declare their intention to abandon the line and provide for a process of public submissions on the matter. The Board of CIE/IR must then consider the submissions made as part of this process in reaching their decision.

6. Existing Rights of Landowners

It was noted that irrespective of which option is agreed, all existing licence agreements held between landowners and CIE/IR must be respected and protected. In the case of a licence from CIE/IR to the 3 local authorities to operate the Greenway, all existing licence agreements between landowners and CIE/IR will stay with CIE/IR as the property owner.

In the case of abandonment and transfer of railway lands to the three local authorities, all existing licence agreements will be retained and incorporated into the Greenway and dealt with by the three local authorities.

7. Advantage to KKCC of an abandoned line versus a leased line

The transfer of railway lands will allow greater flexibility and control to the local authorities when developing the Greenway, providing security of investment in the long term for the project. It will also allow for cost savings in developing the Greenway, as technical design requirements will be less onerous if the line is abandoned.

8. Provision for potential commercial opportunities along the Greenway

It was noted that a number of workshops and pre-planning appointments had already taken place with interested parties and the local authorities will work with Leader companies and other stakeholders to maximise potential business opportunities. It was also noted that the three local authorities will jointly develop a visitor experience plan that will also help stimulate enterprise opportunities along the route of the Greenway.

9. South East Greenway V Kilkenny Greenway

It is the intention of the three local authorities to connect up all of their individual Greenways and to collectively market same as the South East Greenway Network. The Kilkenny Greenway will be an integral component of the South East Greenway Network.

Cllr. Aylward formally proposed, seconded by Cllr. Frisby and agreed it was agreed that:

“In order to facilitate the development of the South East Greenway (incorporating the Kilkenny Greenway) from New Ross to Waterford City, along the disused railway line, the Piltown Municipal District formally requests that Coras Iompair Eireann (CIE) and Irish Rail (IR) declare their intention to abandon that section of the disused railway line within the functional area of the Piltown Municipal District.”

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____
Cathaoirleach

Dated: _____