

***Minutes of the Piltown Municipal District Meeting held on Wednesday,
6th March, 2024 at 10:00am at Ferrybank Library Meeting Room.***

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

In attendance: S. McKeown, Director of Services, Stan Cullen, Area Engineer, M. Phelan, Meetings Administrator, O. Bannon, Staff Officer and B. Moloney, Biodiversity Officer.

Condolences

The members all joined with the Cathaoirleach in extending a vote of sympathy to Cllr Breathnach and family on the recent passing of his brother Frank and acknowledged what has been a very difficult two years for the family. Cllr Breathnach thanked the members for their kind words and support, which is very much appreciated.

Cllr Aylward also took the opportunity to extend a vote of sympathy on behalf of the Piltown MD to Cllr Matt Doran on the sudden passing of his brother Ben.

1. **Minutes of Ordinary Statutory Meeting held 7th February, 2024** – proposed by Cllr Frisby, seconded by Cllr Breathnach and agreed.

Matters Arising

With regard to the Curraghmartin Solar Community Benefit Fund, S. McKeown confirmed that the Kilmacow area is also eligible to apply for funding. This was noted.

2. **Consideration of Reports and Recommendations**

- (b) ***Monthly Roadworks Update***

S. Cullen, Area Engineer, circulated report outlining works being progressed and completed over the period since the last meeting, including updates on major schemes – N24 Waterford to Cahir, N24 Tower Road Improvements, N24 Carrick Road, Belmont Link Road/Greenway Connectivity.

The following items were raised and discussed:-

New Bus Stop location, Fiddown – in response to Cllr Dunphy, S. Cullen confirmed that during the design of the Scheme a number of locations were looked at and the current location opposite Merry's garage was considered to be the most suitable and he outlined the reasons for this decision, stating that it has made a huge improvement to safety. It was noted that the bus shelter on the westbound side will be relocated to reduce impact on local residents.

Tower Road Junction, Safety Concerns – Cllr Dunphy raised concerns regarding the exits from Piltown onto the N24, where there are stop signs but no slip lanes to join traffic travelling on the N24. It was noted that two accidents had occurred recently. S. Cullen noted the recent accidents and confirmed that a safety audit has been completed, but the results and recommendations are not yet known. He confirmed that the site is still an active construction site and the cones and traffic management will be removed over the course of the coming month once works are completed.

- (c) ***Roadworks Programme 2024***

S. Cullen, Area Engineer, circulated the proposed Roadworks Schedule and Maps for the Roadworks Programme based on the funding allocations received for 2024.

The Roadworks Programme 2024, as circulated, was proposed by Cllr Dunphy, seconded by Cllr Frisby and agreed.

S. Cullen confirmed that total funding for the Piltown MD as set out in the Programme is €4.28m.

- (d) ***Greenway Update***

S. McKeown circulated a report and provided the following update to members.

Mainline Works

- Glas Civil Engineering Ltd commenced works on Lot 5A (c.5.5km section from Ferrybank to Curraghmore) in November. Works are progressing to programme and the anticipated contract completion date remains end of 2024. See image of recent progress beside the Rhu Glen Hotel.
- The Project Team have re-run the tender for provision of Technical Consultancy Services to complete all remaining phases of the Greenway, using the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) Framework. The return date for tenders is end of March and it is expected to appoint the successful consultant in May.
- Legal contracts are now finalised and ready for signing to conclude the acquisition of the lands along the abandoned rail corridor from CIE.

Charter for South East Greenway Accommodation Works

- A Charter for Accommodation Works has been agreed by the three local authorities to consolidate the approach taken to date and to provide a consistent approach to the provision of accommodation works for landowners adjoining the Greenway, in particular the criteria applied to determine works at agricultural crossing points along the Greenway.

Interpretation, Wayfinding & Orientation Plan

- We await receipt of the draft Plan from The Paul Hogarth Company (TPHC).

Related Schemes

- **Greenway Link to Glenmore**: A funding application has been submitted under the Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF) to advance this project, which also incorporates the provision of a Cycle Loop via the Pink Rock and along the scenic River Barrow.
- **Greenway Link to Slieverue**: The Feasibility and Route Selection Report are completed. Consultation is ongoing with the TII Structures Section prior to commencing the planning process.
- **Woodstock (Inistioge) to South East Greenway Link**: The Tender for Technical Consultancy Services to identify and progress a route to planning has been awarded by TII to RPS Consulting

S. McKeown responded to queries in relation to the following:-

Phases/Lots – in response to Cllr Aylward, S. McKeown outlined the reasons for the number of separate Lots and Contracts, noting the specialist nature of some of the works involved in the development, requiring specialist Contractors. It was also noted that the urban sections at New Ross and Ferrybank are required to be delivered first as a condition of grant funding.

Extension of car park Glenmore – it was noted that the site compound at Glenmore is no longer required allowing for the additional car park spaces to be provided.

Toilet facilities at Glenmore – guidance on Greenway development provides that toilets facilities should be provided at the trail head car parks at New Ross and Ferrybank.

Woodstock Link tender – it was confirmed to Cllr Breathnach that a single tender has been awarded to bring this through all phases to planning, which is likely to be a Part 10 application to An Bord Pleanála.

(e) Ferrybank Shopping Centre

It was confirmed that further correspondence has issued to Dunnes Stores through the Operations Manager in an effort to engage with them on corporate matters, in relation to the Joint Retail Strategy with Waterford and Local Area Plan, but no response has been received as yet.

Cllr Breathnach suggested that Dunnes Stores be kept informed of progress in relation to the Joint Retail Strategy and LAP review.

(a) Biodiversity Action Plan Update/Discussion Paper

Ms. Bernadette Moloney, Biodiversity Officer, was in attendance to provide an update to members and outline the process for the development of the new Biodiversity Action Plan for County Kilkenny this year.

She began her presentation and outlined the following:-

Biodiversity Officer's Role – to develop and implement a Biodiversity Action Plan, covering three main areas of Research & Data Collation, Policy Development & Internal Operations and Projects, Training & Education.

Recent Developments – Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030 was launched in January, containing 28 actions requiring Local Authority action. The new Land Restoration Law requires EU members states to prepare National Restoration Plans within two years, when the law is commenced.

Biodiversity Action Plan Timeline 2024

A discussion paper has been prepared, as circulated to members, containing six broad questions which will be shared with the public in the coming weeks for consideration to get their feedback and views.

Community engagement will be undertaken in the coming months with the many different stakeholders and groups to air their views and see how they can assist.

Establishment of the Biodiversity Action Group in March or early April.

Action Plan Development, which will be driven by science, action specific with performance indicators – April/May

Public Consultation to take place in June, with Plan approval being sought by Sept/October 2024.

Ms. Moloney outlined the questions contained in the discussion paper, which seeks to establish the level of awareness of the public, suggestions on how we might lessen impact on biodiversity, identify what has been lost and what improvements the public would like to see by 2050.

Funding Mechanisms 2024 – funding sources were noted from the Heritage Council and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, with match funding from KCC.

Ms. Moloney outlined her areas of work and what she will be working on in the coming year as part of her role in relation to research, data collection, projects, training and education.

All the members thanked Ms. Moloney for her very informative presentation and she responded to queries raised in relation to the following:-

- protected habitats and mapping of same
- membership of the Biodiversity Action Group, positive communication with different stakeholders
- impact on crop production, identifying and monitoring threats to pollinators
- events during Biodiversity Week and Heritage Week to encourage active engagement
- research and mapping of information and data
- acknowledgement of the huge level of good will from the public for the work being done
- concerns at invasive species across the county
- catalogue what has been lost and efforts to restore same
- compliments to KCC outdoor staff on attendance at training and giving of their time

It was agreed to circulate a copy of Ms. Moloney's presentation to members.

3. Business prescribed by Statute, Standing Order or Resolution of the Municipal District Members for transaction at such meetings

None

4. Other business set forth in the Notice convening the meeting

None

5. Notice of Motion

None

6. Correspondence

M. Phelan confirmed the following:-

Joint meeting with Carrick-on-Suir MD will take place on 25th April, members to forward additional items they wish to include on the Agenda.

No date agreed as yet for the next joint meeting with Waterford, M. Phelan to revert in due course.

Further contact made with the Regional Manager, HSE in relation to the proposed visit to the Primary Care Centre, date to be agreed.

7. AOB:

Cllr Dunphy proposed that a letter be sent to TII and the Minister to seek funding to progress the N24 and N25 Schemes, noting that these two routes are in the top three in the Country for the number of accidents occurring on them. This was seconded by Cllr Breathnach and agreed.

S. Cullen advised that it is the intention of Kilkenny County Council and Tipperary County Council to write to the Minister directly and to engage with Ministers and TDs to seek funding to progress the N24 Waterford to Cahir Scheme through stage 3. This was noted.

Cllr Breathnach also asked for follow up with TII to arrange a meeting with them to help progress these and other matters.

Cllr Doherty asked if any form of grant assistance was available to landowners for the removal of diseased roadside trees, the cost of which is a considerable financial burden.

S. Cullen acknowledged that ash dieback does make felling more difficult, new machinery has been developed so contractors are better equipped to address this issue.

Cllr Breathnach noted recent meeting with the IFA and the intention to bring forward a motion at Council level to seek grant assistance towards any works that may need to be undertaken by farmers in this regard from a health and safety point of view. It was agreed to follow up on this matter for the April meeting.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, 3rd April, 2024 at 10am.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: 

Cathaoirleach

Dated: 