

Minutes of the January Meeting of the Municipal District of Callan-Thomastown

Date: Wednesday 12th January, 2022 at 4.00p.m.

Venue: Meeting conducted via MS Teams remote access.

- Chair:** Cllr Michael Doyle
- Present via MS Teams** Cllr Peter Chap Cleere, Cllr Deirdre Cullen, Cllr Matt Doran, Cllr Joe Lyons, Cllr Patrick O'Neill.
- Apologies:** None
- In attendance via MS Teams:** Ms Fiona Deegan, Meetings Administrator; Mr. Declan Murphy, Area Engineer; Ms Mary Mulholland, Director of Services; Ms Annette Fitzpatrick, A/Senior Executive Officer; Mr. Frank Stafford, Senior Engineer; Mr Harry Everard, Trails Kilkenny; Ms Carmel Brett, Staff Officer.

1) Confirmation of Minutes

(a) Minutes of the Municipal District meeting of Wednesday 8th December, 2021

The minutes of the Municipal District meeting of Wednesday 8th December 2021 were proposed by Cllr Doran, seconded by Cllr Cullen and agreed.

Cllr Doyle was joined by his fellow Councillors in congratulating Cllr Pat O'Neill and his wife Lorna on their recent marriage and extending best wishes on behalf of all the elected members and staff of Kilkenny County Council.

2) Consideration of Reports and Recommendations

(a) Update on Recreational Schemes in the Municipal District of Callan-Thomastown (Frank Stafford)

Mr Frank Stafford gave the members a presentation on all projects delivered in the Municipal District under the Outdoor Recreation and Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) from 2018 to 2021, along with an update on projects advanced in partnership with Kilkenny Leader Partnership. It was noted the presentation excluded projects being delivered under RRDF and the Town & Village Renewal Scheme.

An update was provided on works completed to date under the ORIS and details provided on some of the projects recently completed such as Brandon Hill Summit Walk, Nore Valley Walk, Graiguenamanagh Outdoor Activity Hub, Abbey Meadow Callan, Silare Wood Boardwalk Graiguenamanagh and the Woodstock Estate Trail Enhancement Scheme. It was noted that works on the Moat Field Trail Callan Phase 2 had yet to commence and was subject to getting a long-term lease agreement in place with the landowners. It was noted the value of works funded up to 2020 was c.€1,500,000.

He then listed the projects that secured funding under the 2021 ORIS and that would be delivered in 2022/23, providing details on the following individual projects, Kings River Walk Enhancement Scheme in Kells, The Community Loop Walk Network, promotion and marketing of Woodstock Estate and Outdoor Kilkenny, Walking trail extension at Silaire

Wood and Accessibility and mobility works at Woodstock Estate, noting the works were valued at €310,000, advising when complete will see a total investment of €1.81m into the MD since funding was first received in 2018.

Members were advised of the projects delivered under a partnership approach with Kilkenny LEADER Partnership and Council's Project Office. It was noted a c.€900,000 under the Leader Programme 2014-2020 was provided to advance project under this initiative within the Municipal District. The projects delivered or nearing completion in the Graiguenamanagh area included The Barrow Valley Outdoor Activity Hub Access Rd and Serviced Campervan sites, The Abbey Hall Recreational Area, The Men's Shed, Silaire Wood Carpark and Signage Upgrade and a Feasibility study for two new pedestrian bridges over the River Barrow.

The Members were further advised that it was agreed 4 no. additional projects within the Municipal District would be progressed under the partnership initiative under the LEADER Programme 2021-2023 which the following Bennettsbridge Riverside Amenity Area - Feasibility and Design Option Report, Woodstock – Link to SE Greenway - Route Options Report, Nore Valley Link - Bennettsbridge – Thomastown - Route Options Report and the Callan Heritage Trail, updates were provided on the status of each project and the estimated value of same was noted at €185.000

Mr Stafford said nine of the 31 playgrounds in Co Kilkenny are located in the Callan-Thomastown Municipal District and with playgrounds having an installation cost of €930k excluding maintenance costs and older stock being 10-15 years old, he asked the members to consider the cost of playground maintenance when allocating funds going forward.

Cllr Doyle and the members thanked Mr. Stafford for his update and raised the following items:

- Possible for proposed extension of Moat Field walkway to exit onto R695 at Westcourt – current ORIS funding provides for completion of a figure 8 walkway with ultimate goal to connect to Brother Edmund Rice Heritage Centre but will investigate provision of this link;
- Potential for development of Kells with provision of extra lighting and car parking facilities at Kings Mill – costs involved and location in Special Area of Conservation would pose a hurdle but may be considered under future rounds of funding;
- Possible information sign at Famine graveyard, Callan
- Timeframe and process around investigating potential Nore Valley link from Bennettsbridge to Thomastown – generally once Consultants are appointed timeframe of six months with public consultation and engagement with communities and elected members being a vital part of the process. Walkway suitability assessment both sides of the river welcomed;
- Works to make carpark and walkways more accessible to all at Woodstock welcomed;
- It was clarified that any assessment of future potential sites for camper van parking facilities would require a strong local committee at the outset which would run the project as a commercial enterprise.
- Need for Graiguenamanagh to be promoted as a national and international tourist destination;
- Signage at Brandon Hill welcomed, Coillte was acknowledged for their part in facilitating provision of parking spaces.

(b) Update on Trails in Co. Kilkenny (Harry Everard)

Mr Harry Everard, Trails Kilkenny, gave the members a presentation on trails activity within the Callan-Thomastown Municipal District, explaining that Trail Kilkenny is involved in the management, development, maintenance and marketing of all trails in the County, adding Kilkenny LEADER Partnership and Kilkenny County Council has been able to undertake significant works on trails and trail development under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS).

He informed the members of a Walks Scheme which is funded by the Department of Rural & Community Development to facilitate a bi-annual payment, currently to 28 landowners, to maintain sections of trails which cross their land, with approximately 30 new landowners to be added to the scheme.

He said a Walks Scheme development Fund is available to all walks covered under the Walks Scheme for small scale maintenance projects value up to €10k.

Ten applications have been put forward for ORIS funding, three from LEADER and seven from Kilkenny County Council, with audio and visual aids planned as part of an effort to make Kilkennys' walking trails more accessible for all.

Mr Everard said trail maintenance is mainly done by Rural Social Schemes and local communities, with Mr Everard monitoring the trails and oversight by Sport Ireland who once satisfied the trails meets the required standard will register and insure same along with promoting the trail via their media platforms.

The members were informed that the Trails Kilkenny website shows all registered trails countywide, with a live map which allows people to navigate along the trail.

Cllr Doyle thanked Mr Everard for his presentation and the members raised the following items:

- Signage on Nore Valley Walk – it is intended to have five audio signs funded through LEADER, with visual signs funded through ORIS, detailed design not complete yet;
- Possibility of partnering with Coillte to develop standard walking trails along routes already used by walkers, such as in Glencolumb woods, it was requested that this trail be a pilot for similar projects in other woods;
- Clarification regarding Insurance cover on trails located on privately owned lands – Mr Everard confirmed that Sports Ireland arranges Insurance cover for all registered trails.

(c) Monthly Roads Update (Declan Murphy)

Mr D. Murphy A/Senior Executive Engineer updated the members on the following road related matters, outlining various projects updates and timelines.

- Road Works Programme 2022 – Mr Murphy said essential drainage works and emergency maintenance road repairs will continue in all areas over the next month. He informed members that a draft list of discretionary works for footpaths, drainage, public lighting and general works will be submitted to the members for discussion prior to the February Municipal District meeting for review, with the list being finalised and presented to the elected members in the February meeting for consideration.

Restoration improvements will follow the approved 3-year Multi Annual Programme, Restoration Maintenance works will be considered by the members, Low Cost Safety Schemes determined by the Department and CIR & LIS works will be carried out in accordance with existing list of applications.

- Town & Village Renewal Schemes – Updates given for 2020 applications at Stoneyford-Ennisnag and Hugginstown:

- ORIS projects – update given earlier on Moat Field Phase 2;
- CLÁR 2021 – works delayed due to Covid related staff shortages, contractor to recommence on site as soon as possible;
- Active Travel – preliminary designs for Part V111 planning for Callan one-way system have been issued and will be presented at the February Municipal District meeting, Callan by-pass widening of footpaths hoped to go to tender late in 2022;
- General – works for installing ramps in Kilmoganny and Bennettsbridge delayed due to Covid, design work on Killarney work is complete with Irish Rail due to confirm works start date shortly.

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

- Regarding Active Travel, query regarding any indication from the Department if projects for areas with bigger population density will be favoured in 2022 – notification received previous day, it is hoped to have an outline of projects tomorrow. Active Travel section is now established in Kilkenny County Council, must adhere to the requirements of advancing shovel ready projects for 2022 but will commence applying for Section 38s for 2023 projects. A programme of shovel ready works will need to be agreed going forward to establish a rolling programme;
- Removal of silt from eye of bridge in Callan – it has been inspected by the engineer responsible for bridge maintenance, awaiting his report;
- Update on request for new signage at turnoffs for Callan from by-pass – this will be followed up again with Road Design but any signage will comprise part of the planned Active Travel works on the by-pass, however will investigate if any temporary signage can be erected in the interim;
- Clarification requested for ongoing traffic management on Killarney Bridge – one lane of this road is closed to traffic with a stop-go system in place as a wall collapsed into the adjoining field on the Thomastown side of the bridge leaving this side of the road too unstable to accommodate heavy traffic. This lane will remain closed until all repair works are complete.

(d) Monthly Rural Development Update (Annette Fitzpatrick & Mary Mulholland)

Ms Annette Fitzpatrick said €862k funding has been announced by the Department of Rural and Community Development under the Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF) for the design and planning stages for future use of the Friary Complex and the continued regeneration of Callan, this being 80% of the total costs of application.

This funding will be used to get the project to shovel ready stage, thus allowing a further application for funding to be lodged for that stage.

Ms Fitzpatrick said the Communities Activity Fund which is administered by Kilkenny Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) is now open for applications to provide funding to support community and voluntary groups.

Small scale project applications can apply for grants of up to €1000, medium scale up to €5000 and large-scale projects up to €20,000 are available but limited in number.

Ms Mary Mulholland said that while no decisions have been communicated from the Department yet regarding Town & Village Renewal funding from the 2021 applications, the Community Section of Kilkenny County Council is welcoming ideas for projects and requests for information on potential applications.

Cllr Doyle and the members welcomed the announcement of RRDF funding for Callan and thanked Ms Fitzpatrick and Ms Mulholland for their update.

(e) Monthly Greenway Update (Fiona Deegan)

Ms Fiona Deegan gave members an update on the Greenway development outlining the current status of the following:

- Detailed Design;
- Construction;
- Ferrybank Car Park Options;
- Railway Abandonment;
- Links to Slieverue and Glenmore;
- Business Development Officer (BDO);
- Project website details;
- Resident Engineer details;
- Greenway Animation.

Ms Deegan said it was very positive to hear Frank Stafford's presentation earlier in the meeting and added potential links from the Greenway would be very beneficial for the whole Municipal District.

Members thanked Ms Deegan for her update.

3) Business prescribed by Statute, Standing Orders or Resolutions of the Municipal District members for transaction of such meeting.

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

There were no items for discussion

5) Notices of Motion

There were no items for discussion

6) Correspondence

Ms Deegan said Mr Tim Butler, Director of Services, had today confirmed receipt of acknowledgement letter from Minister Patrick O'Donovan regarding the recent letter issued requesting his presence at a plenary Council meeting in Kilkenny to discuss schemes under the CFRAMS programme.

7) Any other Business

The members agreed to attend a workshop regarding the 2022 roadworks programme at 3.30p.m. on Wednesday 9th February immediately prior to the February Municipal District meeting.

This concluded the business of the meeting at 17.35pm

Chairperson: Michael Doyle Date: 6/5/22

