

**ORDINARY MEETING (HYBRID) OF WICKLOW
COUNTY COUNCIL HELD VIA MICROSOFT
TEAMS**

ON

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 1st 2021 AT 2:00 PM

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NON-VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, NOVEMBER 1st 2021:

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, members, you are very welcome to our November meeting. I am just going to hand you over to Helen for a roll call and meeting etiquette, first of all.

ADMINISTRATOR: I would like to welcome the elected members and the people who are attending remotely. As you have already been circulated with the etiquette I would ask that elected members in the chamber are requested to wear a face covering in the council chamber. It can be removed while speaking. Temporary seating arrangements are in place to ensure social distancing and we have an entry and an exit, separate doors, entry on the right-hand side and exit on the left. In relation to the elected members attending remotely, speakers are asked to keep their camera on throughout the meeting, when you are not speaking please keep your microphone on mute and please contact me if you lose connectivity and we will try and get you back. I am now going to take the roll call.

[ROLL CALL TAKEN]

CLLR O'NEILL: Anseo, Helen, you are very low, I can only barely grasp you.

[ROLL CALL CONTINUES TO BE TAKEN]

CATHAOIRLEACH: Just before we go on to votes of sympathies, could the members who are remotely on today, can you ensure your volume is turned up to the last, some of you it's very hard to hear your response, so if possible just check that. So I will just move on to votes of sympathy, please.

ADMINISTRATOR: Annie Byrne, mother of our colleague, Bernie McBride. Valerie Carroll, sister of our colleague, Marianne Doyle. Mary Ford, mother of our colleague, David Ford. Patrick Dennehy. PJ Lane, father of our colleague, Joe Lane and Willie Cullen father of our colleague, Billy Cullen.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, any members? Gerry O'Neill.

CLLR DUNNE: I would like to be associated with Valerie Carroll, I know the family quite well. Pat Carroll her husband recently won the Scott Medal up in Dublin which I attended with the family, so it's a very sad occasion and I want to be associated with the condolences.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Patsy Glennon.

CLLR GLENNON: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, I like to offer my condolences on behalf of the council to three families in the West Wicklow area, three tragedies, one as bad as the other. The O'Donoghues of Hollywood. The Nolan family and the Miley family of Ballyknocken. All lost young men through tragic circumstances and my deepest sympathy to them.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Edward Timmins.

CLLR TIMMINS: Just briefly, I would like to be associated with the condolences for Willie Cullen for the father of (sound distortion) also, I would like to be associated with the proposal by my colleague, Patsy Glennon.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Gerry O'Neill.

CLLR O'NEILL: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, I just want to be associated with both Cllr Timmins and Cllr Glennon's votes of sympathy. It's been a really tough time in the west for the last while, especially those through young deaths in the area. I just want to be associated with those. It's in, the area is really in shock at the deaths and the various goings on at the moment. So thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr O'Neill. We will just have a minute's silence, thank you.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: May their souls and souls of those faithfully departed rest in peace.

CATHAOIRLEACH: We have a suspension of standing orders from Cllr M Kavanagh, I am just going to ask Helen to read out the suspension.

ADMINISTRATOR: It's proposed by Cllr M Kavanagh and seconded by Cllr Joe Behan, that this council... that this council writes to the National Citizens Information Board to express its deep concern at the possibility of the withdrawal of the Citizens Advice Service from Wicklow Town and furthermore that the proposed funding be granted immediately to secure a suitable premises for the service to continue.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, are we happy to actually send a letter for that, or do we want to discuss it further? Okay. Rather than discuss it, are we happy to just send the letter? Okay, all agreed, yeah, thank you. Cllr Mullen, did you want to propose a disposal? Or a suspension? No, okay, all right. Moving on to the agenda. Item number one, to confirm and sign the minutes of the ordinary meeting of Wicklow County Council held on the 4th of October 2021. Can I have a proposer and seconder, please? Proposed by Cllr Fitzgerald, seconded by Cllr Winters.

Okay, item number 2, To consider the disposal of property comprised in Folio No. WW2896L in the townland of Tombrean, Co Wicklow, being the property known as Tombrean, Carnew, Co Wicklow by Transfer Order to Mr Seamus Alwell of Tombrean, Carnew, Co Wicklow, the person entitled to the freehold interest in the property. (As per notice previously circulated) proposed by Cllr Mullen. Seconded by Cllr Blake. Agreed, everyone? Yeah. Agreed.

Item number 3, to consider the disposal of property comprised in Folio 460L in the townland of Knockranahan Lower, Arklow, Co Wicklow, being the property known as 5 Knockanrahan, Arklow, Co Wicklow by Transfer Order to Mr John Leo Doyle of 17 St Michael's Terrace, Arklow, Co Wicklow, the person entitled to the freehold interest in the property. (As per notice previously circulated).

Item number four, To consider the disposal of 0.0061 hectares or thereabouts comprised in Folio WW4065 in the townlands of Sheephouse and Knockanrahan Lower, Arklow, Co Wicklow, being a strip of land to the side of 30 Fr Redmond Park, Arklow, Co Wicklow to Ms Sinead Kavanagh (nee Kearns) of 30 Fr Richmond Park, Arklow, Co Wicklow.

Proposed by Cllr Fitzgerald, seconded by Cllr Annesley. All agreed? Item number 5, to approve a temporary overdraft accommodation of 20 million for the financial year ending 31st of December 2022, letter attached. Brian, do you want to just come in on that? Have you anything to add?

BRIAN GLEESON: This is a fairly straightforward. It's a request we make every year. Fortunately we haven't had to use the overdraft facility in the last number of years, but obviously it's important that we have the facility in place. It's just to cover us in

the main for timing differences if we are, especially on the capital side, if we are developing major capital schemes like in the area of housing and obviously we have, RDF projects and the greenway project as well, that will be commencing so, obviously the way the funding works would be you would incur the costs and then claim afterwards, so it's just to cover us in relation to timing differences, as I said we haven't had to avail of the facility heretofore, but it's a case of making sure we have it in place. So we just need a proposer and seconder for that?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Proposed by Vincent Blake, seconded by Cllr Winters. Okay, all agreed? All agreed. Okay, item number 6, to enter into a Section 85 agreement between Wicklow County Council and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council for the N11 but priority interim scheme, draft agreement attached. I think we have John Bowes to give an introduction to this

JOHN: I am here, the severity of the traffic issues on the N11, particularly at peak time, in conjunction with public feedback needs an early intervention to start addressing problems on the corridor. Accordingly a project to assess the feasibility of providing bus lanes on the N11 is progressing. If feasible bus lanes could offer a practical solution in advance of the main junction scheme. This separate project called the Bus Priority Interim Scheme is a multi-authority project involving Wicklow County Council, TII, the NTA and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown. The Bus Priority Scheme is being implemented in accordance with TII's project management guidelines and aims to deliver bus priority on the national road in the form of designated bus lanes that can be used during peak hours to avoid congested traffic lanes. The project is currently at Phase 2 and work is progressing on developing feasible options, along the route, which extends to Loughlinstown to Junction 9 in the south.

In order to facilitate the project in an efficient manner to the operation and preliminary design of statutory orders, Wicklow County Council proposed to enter into a Section 85 agreement, with Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council. The transportation Water and Emergency Services Department is of the opinion that it would be more efficient and effective if Wicklow County Council delivered the project and the powers functions and duty was Dun Laoghaire Rathdown county council in respect of the objects selection report preliminary design statutory orders and construction of the scheme, within the administrative area of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council. Therefore it is proposed that an agreement pursuant to Section 85 of the Local Government Act be entered into with Wicklow County Council and Dun Laoghaire County Council to give effect to this agreement. And, accordingly, it is proposed that the following resolution be passed that, hereby resolve that the powers functions and duties of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council in relation to the option, selection and preliminary design, statutory orders and construction of the N11/M11 Bus Priority Interim Scheme shall be exercised and performed by Dun Laoghaire County Council and that they enter into the agreement with Wicklow County Council pursuant to Section 85 of the Local Government Act 2001 to give effect to this agreement.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, John. Cllr Derek Mitchell.

CLLR MITCHELL: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Clearly this is a good idea that these bus lanes are being planned from the northern border of the County Down to the Glenview Hotel junction on the N11. I would be happy to propose this and I think we should accept it. I would say, I found the consultation side very vague, there wasn't much information as to what they are going to do on it and it would also seem that

the bus lanes are being planned separate from the concept of what buses might be on them and where they go to. While, that may be already in an engineering sense and people are anxious to know that there will be buses to where they want to go and I would hope that some of the consultation would involve that. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Okay, so, sorry, Cllr Murphy...

CLLR BOURKE: When will they be able to use the bus lanes, to get to wherever, college or work in the mornings?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. John, do you want to come back in on that point?

JOHN: The scheme itself is to provide the infrastructure on the N11, the bus services themselves we have looked at bus services as part of the main scheme and we are in discussion with the NTA on what services might use or what additional services might use the route. But, at the moment as part of this scheme it would benefit its existing regional services. Just on the consultation itself, we published the first bulletin on the scheme which gives an introduction and background to the scheme. That was published on the scheme website on Friday, so there is some information there on the scheme, albeit only recently posted and I suppose just to note that the scheme is in the early stages of development, but its intended, as a short-term scheme to be delivered in advance of the main junction 4-14 improvement scheme.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, thank you, John. Cllr Jodie Neary.

CLLR NEARY: Actually that just answers my question about the proposals here linked with all the other proposals with the N11/M11, so that is fine, that has answered my question.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Proposed by Cllr Mitchell, could I have a seconder please? Cllr Bourke.

All agreed? Okay. Item number 7, to consider NOAC local Authority Performance Indicator Report 2020, the report has been attached. Very comprehensive report, I am going to hand you over to Lorraine to bring us through this.

LORRAINE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, yes, elected members have been circulated with the NOAC Local Authority Performance Indicator Report for 2020. It is a very substantial document. It runs 150 pages excluding the summary at the back. There are 42 indicators across 11 areas of the county council, housing, roads, water, planning, fire services, library, recreational and economic development.

So Cathaoirleach, Wicklow County Council improved its performance across a range of indicators during 2020 despite Covid challenges, while providing an additional innovative services during the pandemic. So, for example, Wicklow County Council established the Community Call service to provide support to more than 1,795 people since March 2020. Alongside this the Council continued to deliver services across its directorates, so, for example, the council added 251 units to its council housing stock in 2020. Motor tax transactions online significantly increased to 88.7%. The Local Enterprise Office increased its trading online vouchers to support Wicklow businesses to increase their online offering and they also provided 563 mentoring supports to businesses. The total road improvement expenditure was 7.6 million which strengthened and resealed 156km of local roads. The visitors to the council's website and our social media following increased also and Wicklow County Council has continued to demonstrate that it's a clean county with 80% of the county shown to be either litter-free or only slightly littered. So this is a continuous level of improvement from 68% in 2018 and 76% in 2019. So, Cathaoirleach, just to say that

data such as this, which is fed in by other agencies as well gives Wicklow County Council the opportunity to look at the results and streamline their processes and monitor the various performance over a three-year period and the senior management team of Wicklow County Council does this on an annual basis and periodically during the year. If elected members have any questions, Cathaoirleach, I would be glad to either answer them today, or if they want to feed them into me.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Edward Timmins.

CLLR TIMMINS: I very much welcome this report. It's a very useful document and I would ask everyone to have a look and see where Wicklow benchmarks versus various counties. We are good in some, not so good in others. But I think the one point I like to make and I made this last year and I would ask that we write to NOAC about this, getting the report being published in October, the tenth month of the year for 2020, to me, is very late. I would ask could we write to NOAC and ask that these reports be produced in the first quarter, month three or month four, because when you get data and it's out of date, it's like getting accounts, the further it's out of date the less relevant it becomes. So I propose we write to NOAC to ask we could have this information published by quarter one.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Dermot O'Brien.

CLLR D O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach just a quick comment. As Cllr Timmins said it's worthwhile to get the data and see the stats and do the comparative analysis. I would make the comment that I would like to see the case study and the people behind the performance that are mentioned in the NOAC Report. It's quite one dimensional when it's just data, analysis and statistic, I would love to see some case studies integrated into the report.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Blake.

CLLR BLAKE: Thank you, Chairman. Just one quick question as well as people have said, it's a comprehensive report, but probably a question as well, probably related into the management report maybe as well in that regard, but it's in terms of the commercial rates. I have been asked a few questions about it recently in relation to the, I don't know the collection rate of it, but the working relationship between business people out there and the collection of rates and the promise we have from central government that they were to compensate us from rate reduction. Maybe Brian might update us on what is happened with the rates in the last year, is the Government still, the central finance, still compensating the council for it. I did see in it as well there has been a reduction in the collection from 2020 as against 2019 as well. So just for the public out there at the moment who have been asking questions regarding the situation with rates, maybe we could have an update from Brian on it?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Any other members? No. Okay. Brian, would you like to take that question?

BRIAN GLEESON: Yeah, thank you, Cathaoirleach. Well, obviously look 2020 was a very challenging year on the commercial rates. Some local authorities were hit harder than others, as was in the report. We went down to 70%. I would say that the waiver, the amount we got in the waiver wasn't in the model that determines the collection rate, it wasn't categorising income, it's just categorised separately. So if it was categorised as income it would have been a higher collection rate at 81%, but that is the same across the board. But I suppose to give you a few figures, in 2019 we collected 22.4 million in income on the rates. In 2020 we collected 15.3, but we got a rates waiver of 13.3, so the income was up, it was 28.6, but, as I said, because the waiver wasn't categorised as income, the percentage collection wasn't as high. This year we have received a rates waiver scheme. It was reduced, I suppose

criteria, so it didn't cover, I think the one last year covered about 90% of rate payers. This one was a more focussed rates waiver scheme. We have received about 7.5 million towards that at the end of September this year we have actually collected 20.4 million. That is in actual receipts, so I suppose that is positive that it's already increased on last year's 15.3, so that is a positive outcome and it was actually recently in the last week, it's been announced that there will be a fourth quarter waiver scheme that will be implemented. However it is quite specific that it's going to be in relation to mainly the hospitality area, including areas such as restaurants, cafes, leisure, entertainment sector and certain related categories so. That is the situation in relation to the rates waiver scheme. We don't anticipate a waiver scheme to continue into 2022. So if there is anything further I am happy to answer?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Nobody else. So I will just go back to Lorraine, there was one point, Lorraine, Cllr Timmins, in terms of the date of release of the report, is that something that we can bring to the attention of the department?

LORRAINE: We certainly can, but a huge amount of effort goes into all 31 authorities submitting and agencies submitting indicators. There is a huge amount of verifying of the data throughout the local authorities as well, so while we can certainly write to NOAC, I think I don't know what effect it will have.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Are you happy with that, Cllr Timmins?

CLLR TIMMINS: If we send a letter and request could it be collated by end of quarter one and let's see what they come back with. Thanks.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, that is okay, agreed. Okay, moving on to item number 8, to consider the Chief Executive's Monthly Management Report, October 2021. As usual very comprehensive report. So members, I would ask you, it takes well over an hour normally to go through this report, which is something that is important to everyone and I absolutely understand that, but if you could just keep your questions to a minimum and not go into long speeches, I would appreciate it. Absolutely have your say, but just keep it to a minimum, thank you. So, first up is Cllr Edward Timmins.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Can I mention one or two items before we start? We got funding from the Department of Tourism and Culture for an amphitheatre at Bray Esplanade. It's treated hard wood seating sound and lighting so we are going to bring that to detailed design at this stage. Similarly Abbey Lane in Arklow, funding for outdoor dining infrastructure scheme came through so we will start work on that. Tonight on Nationwide to let you know, there is a full piece on the Wicklow Film Commission that is tonight at 7.00pm. Also, the outdoor recreation infrastructure scheme... (sound gone)... relatively small ones, so Avonmore, River Project, Age Friendly Trial Bikes for elderly Avoca Red Kite Walk and the Wicklow Way markings, they call came through which is very welcome.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. First is Cllr Edward Timmins.

CLLR TIMMINS: Thank you, Chairman, I will be brief, I am going to raise one point today, I won't repeat the point I made other months. Just in relation to the council land at Avonrea in Blessington. The 31 acres that the council owns where there is a proposal for social housing which is very welcome. I read in the papers that there is a master plan being developed for that 31 acre site and consultation is being had with certain member of the public. I am concerned that us as councillors, elected councillors for the area that covers Blessington have not been covered in relation to the master plan.

I think we should be consulted and kept up to speed in it. Our opinion should be sourced by the consultants or whoever is putting together this master plan, not even

sure who is doing it, but someone is clearly putting together a master plan and I think we have been left outside in relation to consultation for input into this master plan. I am quite concerned about that. I think it's a worrying development that things like this are happening, so I would ask that the local councillors be informed and brought up to speed and consulted with. We have monthly meetings, municipal meetings and there is a lot of opportunity for us to be consulted in relation to these matters. Thank you.

HEATHER 1430-1500

CLLR BEHAN: A couple items, following on from Edward Timmins well-made point. The Chief Executive announced we have a grant of 250,000 for attempted amphitheatre on the northern end of the Bray seafront. I saw a tweet a couple days ago about this. We have never heard one mention of this at the meeting in Bray District Council.

And, either, the Chief Executive tells us here and now that it does not matter what we as the Cllrs think you think of the ideas or it does. If it matters, particularly somewhere as sensitive as the seafront in Bray that the structure applied for, that, and we don't have the courtesy shown to us, that we are even told it is applied for nor have we seen the plans, where it is to be, we don't know the first thing about it. So, can the Chief Executive for once and all tell us, does it matter to him if the clears are consulted about these or not? As far as I'm concerned if we are to support projects that are promoted, we have to know about them. To have a chance to discuss them. That's the first point. I agree, there is Edward Timmins talking about it in another part of the county, this is a trend that continued for some time. As a public representative I'm not happy about it. We are finding out from Twitter, when we are supposed to represent the people and then we get a remark here today about it again. It is not good enough as far as I'm concerned with regards housing, I want to ask a couple questions, there is a lot of talk from the Government about the last few months and the housing action plan and in particular, affordable housing schemes. Many, many people in the county that don't qualify for HAP or RAS or the social housing list, who are not earning enough money to be able to borrow the money to buy a house in Wicklow, they are waiting with bated breath for an affordable housing scheme in this county. Can we find out, are we nearer having an affordable shoeing scheme in this county? Will we have 1, 2, where are they to be? When we will know, when are the people of this county to find out about this. And second, in relationship specifically to bray, in the last week or so, I counted up to ten vacant council houses in Bray that are boarded up. There was a lot of talk by the Government and the executive about the great work we were doing in getting these volumes into use. We have a housing emergency, we have good houses that need some work but suddenly the tap for the financing seems to have been turned off. I don't know if the tap is turned off by the department for environment or housing or if it has been turned off in Wicklow County Council but I think it is a disgrace, we have good houses that could be let back to people on the housing lists boarded up for God knows how long more will be the case. So, can we get specifics from the executive

about what is to happen with these boarded up houses? I'm sure it is not just in Bray about in other parts of the council as well.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Melanie Corrigan.

CLLR CORRIGAN: In relation to the public lighting can I ask the council contact the ESP to get the lighting fixed in Enniskerry, we moved it to the bog meadow, we did the car park it worked well. With the shorter nights it is getting darker earlier, it is a health and safety issue we have the Dublin bus there, it is safety for the bus drivers and the passengers, so can I ask that the temporary light put up on urgency in getting the lights fixed. Also the war memorial and the new lights on Duncairn Terrace at Bray are cut in but not switched on. So can I ask that they are looked at as well.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Gerry Walsh.

CLLR WALSH: On the housing issue account, firstly, looking at the HAP figures in comparison with 2020, we see increases in 364, as against the tenancy figures, 140. So it is a reliance on the private sector to produce housing. Secondly, on the housing issue account, I read a publication last Thursday, in relation to councils and councils and managers issued with targets from the department in relation to the construction of social homes. Each individual looking at targets but it says in the publication that the councillors will be briefed in the coming weeks on the individual targets for new homes to be built in the local authorities. The target for County Wicklow is 1348, that is for next year I believe. Looking at a Chief Executive's report, and the schemes on the site, with the pipelines of schemes that we have 187 on site and 296 pipeline, so looking for a comment from the Chief Executive and with the targets, what they mean for County Wicklow and in the delivery of much needed social housing in the coming years, bear in mind that the, for a one year only figure we have 1348 according to the document. Again, looking at the report, I can see, [inaudible] with the arrears of continuing to go on [inaudible] I comment it on most meetings now. It is going in the wrong direction. I wonder what are the issues here, is it likely to get worse because we have the fuel prices and we have inflation coming down the track. People find it more and more difficult to meet payments, so wonder how to address this. And a final point, on the off-shore windfarms. And the recent publication in relation to the community benefit fund. That is proposing it will be [distortion of sound] oversight responsibility of national level with a designated community benefit fund manager put in place for a custodial role. So what is the impact there for County Wicklow. We will be the hosting communities for the off-shore projects so I hope that funding allocations will continue to be directed towards the communities and not going into a national fund to have a form of equalisation like we have seen in the past.

Declan on the housing issue accounts there from Cllr Behan and Cllr Walsh.

>>: The housing action plan, we are preparing a plan to be submitted to the department in December. It covers delivery of social and affordable housing, so we are looking at affordable housing. We have a number of schemes to consider as suitable for affordable housing. Last week the department set out requirements for applying for the subsidy for the affordable housing. so we are analysing that. And we

are looking to make affordable housing a part of the scheme within Bray but it is a challenge with the construction costs to meet the densities on that site. But it is what we are looking at. The way it works, it is up to each council to apply to the department for the funding for a particular scheme and then advertised if the scheme is granted by the department we can then advertise it to the public. So we are a bit away from that yet. People will be able to apply for pleasure schemes, not in general. The vacant houses in Bray, this are a number of houses in different stages of work. The norm is to board up as soon as they are vacant. Some are being worked on, some are tendered. There is increase, given that we have had new houses allocated in Bray over the last year and more coming on screen now. There is increase in the number of resulting re-lets as people are moved, if that is downsized or upsized or whatever, there is always a number of people that move on to the newer houses that come on stream. That creates re-lets. So they are worked on at different stages.

The issue of the targets, that 1248 is for the five years, Cllr Walsh, the target from 22-26. In line with the proposed plan. We think it is achievable. We are working on the housing reaction plan at the moment and give full details in presenting that to the members as soon as it is ready.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Declan.

Just bringing in Lorraine on the other issue on Bray? For Cllr Behan.

>>: We have secured a grant of 250,000 for the outdoor public spaces scheme.

I suppose, when you apply for a grant, this is, when I say it is a long time in the making, it is that it is discussed with the department and Cathaoirleach and the concept of performance space on the seafront has been in the ether for a while, we applied for a grant. One grant is available, one for each local authority. One grant of 250,000 for each local authority. So it is great that we secured the grant. It will cost substantially more than the 250,000 and the Chief Executive is committing the balance of the funding, the space had to link with the arts, economy and tourism, so for example the seafront is the jewel in the crown, so with regards tourism, vibrancy and the night time economy and then we have the Mermaid Art Centre in Bray and a wonderful selection of performances going on there. It will link in with the proposed performance phase. So like I said, Cathaoirleach, what we secured is a grant. Now we must go and do the public consultation, public engagement, and go through the tender processes, et cetera, so we can certainly, we just have one concept drawing, that we can certainly circulate to elected members and the Bray elected members to discuss it again at our Bray meetings tomorrow evening. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Other questions there on public lighting, John you can take that?

CLLR BOWLES: To reports there, we will take a look at those and see if they can be expedited.

Thank you. [distortion of sound] I will hand you over to the Chief Executive to take Edward Timmins' question.

>>: That is the master plan. It is early stages, we are coming to the Baltinglass, no question about that. They have started to do concept drawing, we can bring the drawings to the next meeting to get the Cllrs involved we are doing a housing scheme but what to do with the rest of the land, owned for commercial employment that we want to keep. But it is an area with open space, it is the area of active space, that we want to look at, what we can get in there in terms of a running track, swimming pool. With the concept drawings, the first port of call will be [inaudible].

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Leonard.

CLLR LEONARD: I wanted to mention as well, I empathise with Cllr Behan and Timmins, I was involved in preliminary work with a recreation scheme. I saw it on Facebook on another feed. I could not get the information and I had people engaged with, trying to get them on board with the projects and there was a complete breakdown of communications. It is something that we have to work on as a county going forward, and to involve the Cllrs, we are the representatives of the people on the ground to get on board with lots of the projects. In relation to homelessness, I wanted to ask the Chief Executive and the housing section do we have the capacity to deal with emergency homes cases going forward? I recently, in the last few weeks have seen a huge increase in homeless presentations. I am looking at the figure of one rough sleeping up to the end of September there, on the Chief Executive's report, I have had at least four. Some of them I have had to try to find accommodation myself as there was a lack of resources. We seem to be sending people from County Wicklow and from our own locality in Arklow, that the only solution is to send them to Dublin or to Carnew, so, I wonder do we have to secure more were emergency accommodation looking at the winter time ahead and there is increase in house sales as well, so lots of [distortion of sound] I don't know if it is because the property market is at a high. I feel there is a tsunami coming, to ensure that we have the capacity to look after people, and also the capacity to look after the housing staff as I don't know how they do it. I only deal with it as a certain portion of my job but I think that the mental health of the housing staff should be prioritised and I would love to see something put in place to ensure that the people working in that department in particular are looked after.

That's it. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

CLLR O'NEILL: I read last week in the local paper, that the, there was a plan B put in place. Despite the fact, I asked to be brought up-to-date with this maybe 6 months, that whenever there are talks or movement on the land that we will be involved as the local Cllrs but it is always a joke at this stage when the other groups in the area come it tell the elected representatives, we are representing the public. Not only on this issue of the 32ers but a lot of other issues. The town teams have their part to play in any part of country but town teams come and go. And members of town teams come and go but we are here elected by the people. I think it is only the decent thing to do to performance the councillors of what is happening and instead of walking through the streets of Blessington, to meet up with someone and they can tell you more of what is happening than you know yourself. It is not nice. It is not

good. As I say, apart from the 32ers, which, incidentally, I have been told by operations (?) that the changes to the 32ers is through the new Blessington town plan. So I am a little confused on that, if we can work ahead or go ahead with a new plan for there, or whether or not we cannot. But I ask again that the councillors are informed at the very least of the proposals. I know that the Chief Executive has said that we will be at this stage but to my knowledge, now, the consultant is working on this, he is going to be telling us what they thinks.

Thank you. Councillor Paul O'Brien.

CLLR O'BRIEN: There are two items to discuss. One is housing.

In the county development of proposals, I voted for am all proposals and every Part 8 put in front of me. I understand there is a housing crisis it must be sorted. What I cannot tolerate a bad planning. That is what we are witnessing at the moment. Not by the council, not by the officials or by the councils or the residents, it is [distortion of sound] and there comes a time when I think that the council have to stand back against them. We have had two incidents in County Wicklow where they have gone against the council. We have one now in Roseanna where over 100 houses have been granted planning against the wishes of the council and the residents, if every residence had two cars and four journeys to make a day, it is 9,000 journeys over a crowded estate. I think that the money should be spent now to correct this before it goes further. The second point here today, is in terms of the projects that have been going on. I have been here 2.5 years. I have to say some of the projects have been excellent. In my area, they have made a huge impact on County Wicklow town and the surrounding areas. But what I am fearful for, I know that the budget meeting is coming up at the end of the month we know that the belts will be tightened, what I don't want to see is cut back in the projects that have gone before us. We want more future ones, so can I ask the Chief Executive do we have the know how in the council in terms of consultants we hear that the consultants are brought in, they are expensive? Do we have the engineers, the architects within the council to do this work? I assume that they come in, look for information from the council, and we give it back to them and we have to pay a premium for that, so, have we got the consultants, the engineers and the architects to carry out the future projects? Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Irene Winters.

CLLR WINTERS: [distortion of sound] ... building in County Wicklow town, wondering if it is used by, I have been by a couple of times there is no sign of life. I would like to add my support to Edward Timmins and Cllr Behan when we sat here to discuss the landfill at the back of the tap, and we were told how terribly sorry it was, it want an oversight that the members were not informed but if something is distilled down into a tweet, there has been a many, many, many missed opportunities to have any communication with the members by the time it got to a tweet. And it seems almost a modus operandi at had stage and it is wrong.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Miriam Murphy, are you there?

CLLR MURPHY: Thank you. Yeah, I mean, I'm on the same wave length as the other members there, being left in the dark of the projects that come along in their own areas. I don't think it just happened now, I think it has been a long I suppose example of what has happening a while. I remember that Cllr McLoughlin brought it up in Chambers and in the case of Arklow, we have got, brilliant, a grant under the outdoor recreations but there was already a planning funding body in there for the [distortion of sound] museum, so I don't know how it makes out in the same area with two different planning grants. Nobody told us that the grant would be applied for there. And it is all thanks to the engineers putting the applications in, I know that they are probably trying to go up against a deadline when the planning comes in at the main stage but I think that we are, the people on the street, we are the voices of the community and we are left again with red faces.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

I'm going to bring in Teresa O'Brien, to maybe answer the questions, particularly on the homeless housing issues?

CLLR O'BRIEN: On the homes team, they are busy. Each case we deal with on its own merits. Each case brings its own complexities and it can take a lot of time. The team work very hard. We have a number of B and Bs on retainership, and we use them as, I mean, sometimes it does not work out that there are B and Bs in the area of choice but we try to settle people as close to where they want to be as possible. We also have Peter McVerry, running the Housing First for us in the county, we use them regularly as well. We also, like the councillor has said, that we are dealing with the cases as they come up, they present complexities and put on pressure but we deal with each case as it comes along, the homeless team work extremely hard and they are under a lot of pressure. I want to acknowledge that as well. Cllr Winters brought up the building, the low threshold support family hub, is what it will be. There are seven self-contained units, 1, 2 and 3 bedrooms and we hope to be in a position to open it up on the 1st of December. There is snagging being done at the moment. We will be making, we are in constant communication with Dublin Simon with regards to the service level agreement and hopefully it will be open by the beginning of December.

I think that is the two inquiries.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Teresa, that is grand. Declan, to bring you in on Councillor O'Brien's housing issue in terms of large-scale developments granted.

>>: More a planning issue, to be honest with you.

>>: Our role here is to prepare the Chief Executive's report to be sent in. We identify the issues and state clearly that we were not in favour of some of the issues in terms of traffic through the estate, et cetera but that is our role. They make a decision then. The SHDs are finishing, so the legislation is in place for large scale legislation housing schemes to come back to the council, as per the old system, so that system is finishing.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Avril Cronin?

CLLR CRONIN: Thank you very much, firstly to express my disappointment also with the lack of communication with the members of the Baltinglass district, I spoke about it earlier but I think it is a huge concern. At the end of the day people put us in these positions to represent them. I think that the council have a duty to communicate with us on issues around the battling glass municipal distribute it is disappointing to hear about the developments when you open the local paper or walk down the street. So I hope that they can improve and work with us regards communication, the only way to achieve things is if we work together. Secondly to ask about the housing application grants, there are 127 applications open. Many are carried over since 2020, do we have a timeline, a targeted timeline as too when the applications should be processed? There seems a delay in processing the applications, I'm sure you are aware that many applications are necessary for people to carry out daily lives and to continue to live in their own homes so, information on that will be greatly appreciated and finally, I wanted to thank the local fire crew in Dunlavin, we know and hear of the great work that the County Wicklow Fire Services do on a daily basis but I don't think that we realise the extent of their work until you experience first-hand yesterday, I was involved in a serious incident. Thank God, I am OK, I'm here today but I may not have been. So lucky. But the response and the professionalism from our local Fire Services was exceptional. I see these people every day and I never for a second realised to what extent, what they do to carry out their duties, I would like to thank them from the bottom of my heart. So good to me and the others involved in that incident, yesterday, and I cannot thank them enough for their professionalism yesterday.

CATHAOIRLEACH: We were not aware that your involved in that, Cllr, so hope all is well with you and speedy recovery from everybody. Councillor John Mullen? Mull

CLLR MULLEN: (sound extremely low)

In my view, as I have said before, this is reflective of a highly centralised local government system that has become more centralised and unaccountable in the last 15 years and if it continues there is no point in having a locally elected system. So I hope that the person that can deal with this can help to change this. I think maybe COVID has contributed to the worsening of the situation, and hopefully as we open and come more physically back into the building to meeting with officials it will be improved but cards must be marked at this stage. On positive news, it is unusual, it is not in the report but it was at the weekend, a community recycling centre in Wicklow County Council, (issue with sound) ... the first of its kind in the country, it won a national award, the Packman award for national, sustainability awards, a national award in environmental education and awareness, a might achievement for a community recycling centre. I'm not aware of when the upcoming begs are made but lastly with regards to public lighting, I see again, and again we have the highest amount of public lighting out of 2.97, which is low. I know, when you consider it but it is double of most of the areas, so, to refer you to that the relevant parties. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Rory O'Connor.

CLLR O'CONNOR: On a bit of positive news I just wanted to welcome the 18,000 funded for the Kilmac Biodiversity Trail, often they have felt left out when it came to funding so it's great to see. I want to give a shout out to Carol Code who is a great communicator with the group and I think she does need to be commended.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Pat Kennedy.

CLLR P KENNEDY: Thank you, Cathaoirleach and Chief Executive. Cathaoirleach, at our last Municipal meeting in Arklow, we had looked for the figures for the rental income from the Arklow Municipal District. While it's almost three million annually, taken in in the Arklow Municipal District and 500,000 in arrears, I and my fellow colleagues in Arklow have been dealing everyday with unprecedented levels of poor windows, no heating, bad doors, poor insulation in some houses and it beggars belief to think that when we asked one of our colleagues who sits on the housing SPC to bring forward our proposal, or what we are going to put forward as a proposal, we wanted to put forward that 10% of the rental income from the rents in the Arklow Municipal District be ring-fenced for maintenance. Then to be told that that cannot happen. We haven't sent in our proposal yet, but we are going to send it into that chamber but we are told in advance that that can't happen. I think that is disgraceful so think that 10% we can't ring-fence for maintenance for people in houses. Most of these people are older people. We have all learned and heard over the last month that to heat homes for the coming year will be somewhere between €400 and €800 a year. We were told we can't ring-fence any of that funding for maintenance on our own housing stock. Does that mean we are only depending on our allocation from central Government or what does it mean? I would like a response to this and maybe my colleague who brought that to the SPC would like to come in on it. This is not just from me, it's from the six councillors in the Arklow Municipal District. Because we cannot keep up with the level. I was told in this chamber five years ago about houses that would be given windows. Five years ago, still haven't got them. I know there is houses where there is water coming in under the doors. They still cannot be fixed. Yet we are taking in three million euro in rent and we can't ring-fence 10% of it. If that was any other business and they were only ring-fencing 10% in maintenance there would be questions asked. I would like this dealt with, because it's a serious issue and I am extremely concerned about it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Kennedy, I might bring in Declan on some of the housing issues again.

DECLAN: Particularly on the grants for older people and disability, I mean that is always a challenging area and I suppose this year has been particularly difficult with the shutdown and the delays that that caused earlier in the year. So I don't have figures on the schemes that are actually finished but maybe if Cllr Cronin had queries on specific grants they could bring them to us individually and we can answer them. I know that everything has been held up and the difficulties caused by the shutdown of construction generally and catching up on that and contractors are very busy at the moment. I suppose the issue of the funding for the relets is more a finance issue really.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Just on the relets, are the doors, the windows, so it's a question for the budget, we are having a meeting on the 29th. If you want to put more funding into that area, that is fine, but we still have to balance the budget. The only thing I would say is over the next number of year, the Government has allocated a billion to retrofit in the Housing For All to bring all houses up to B2. So that will cover doors, windows and insulation. That is going to make a huge difference. I think there is 50 houses already being done with the current tender, but that will increase over the

years. There will be a lot of funding to bring all of our houses up to B2, so that will cover the doors and houses. But the amount of money we put into housing maintenance we will agree on the 29th, the budget meeting.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Can I bring in Brian Gleeson there. Are you there.

BRIAN GLEESON: Just for information purposes, just I have the figures there.

Repairs and maintenance in Arklow Municipal District, the budget that was allocated was just under 400,000 for repairs and maintenance. Then a further half a million for pre-letting repairs. So, the repairs and maintenance, that would be funded from the rental income that we do get.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Mitchell.

CLLR MITCHELL: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. About the offshore wind farms and the benefit fund from them which will be quite large. It was raised by Cllr Walsh earlier. This is a very, going to be quite substantial, because we have three of the largest wind farms in the country are probably going to be built off Wicklow. These will generate a large amount of power at quite cheap rates, I think. But it's essential that the people who are going to have to look at these are, that those areas are going to get a benefit from this quite substantial fund which is being set up. The consultation document envisages, as Cllr Walsh said, that there would be a national body that would get this money and allocate it out. I would be very suspicious about that altogether that we are not going to see much of it. We should see the whole lot of it in Wicklow, because the three wind farms are off our coast and I think it's important that in the allocation of things, that the local Municipal District clerk or someone is involved, but I would like the council to make a submission by I think it's early December which says this sort of thing to the consultation process in it. The amount of money will be quite substantial and I think there is an intention of the various ecological bodies, or Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland to pinch this money and spend it all over the rest of the country. I think it's important, we will have to look at these wind farms. Some people say they are pretty, I think when we have looked at them for a while, there is going to be an awful lot of them, they won't be pretty. On the other hand as a country we have to get on with this. So I would like the council officials to make a submission on our behalf, insisting that this money comes to Wicklow, not only in the allocation of it, but that there is a proper account for each single, each of the big wind farms to say where it's gone to and which county, thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I am going to bring in Cllr Kavanagh. For some reason Cllr Kavanagh's microphone hasn't shown up on the system. Is it on there?

CLLR M KAVANAGH: Sorry, yeah, this is something that I feel very strongly about. I have been intending to raise it for quite a while now. I want to see the council make some attempt to make land available to clubs and organisations who are desperately trying to find a home within this area. Currently in, I don't know what it's like in the wider county, but currently within Wicklow Town here we have two boxing clubs, a men's shed, a rowing club, a swimming club, three to four bridge clubs, crafters, artists all looking for a space where they can operate. I believe that any society has to support all the activities that happen within that society. It isn't just about houses, it isn't just about roads and foot paths, there is an even bigger picture here. People should be able to carry out activities that are good for their mental health, that are good for their talents, because we produce some great sport stars here, boxer, all kinds of talented sports people. If you are a big organisation like the GAA or Rugby Ireland or some of those larger groups, you have some chance. If you are a smaller organisation you haven't a hope. I am not asking the council in any way, shape or

form to provide these amenities, I am just asking them to try and earmark some land that can be leased or maybe sold at some kind of a compensatory value to these people so that they can fundraise and build their own premises. Otherwise, as a society, we are not really going anywhere. We have to deal with more than just the nuts and bolts issue, these are things that keep people well, keep them motivated, keep kids out of trouble, off the streets, away from the pubs and drugs. We need all these facilities. So I really would ask the council to give some serious consideration to making some land available for these. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr John Snell.

CLLR SNELL: Mine is a very simple, straightforward issue. That is how I would like at it, but unfortunately it doesn't seem to be panning out that way, Cathaoirleach. Early this year, there was a short stretch of road that had to be closed off called Kilmullen Lane in Newtownmountkennedy. It services the local St Catherine's school, which is for kids with special needs. Unfortunately, currently in the month of November we are still sitting here with the road blocked off. It's 700 metres to go from Kiladreenan, to the entrance to this school. But unfortunately the 20 minibuses plus the staff and the parents who drop kids off there on a daily basis have to take a six kilometre route around, come up by the Druid's Hotel. I think it's absolutely madness that we have a Minister for Health who is on record as saying he is engaging with Wicklow County Council, he is engaging with the HSE, which obviously he is responsible for.

The reality is that this is not a Wicklow County Council issue. Wicklow County Council will have to resolve the issue, but there was a leakage from Newcastle Hospital of home fuel heating oil which was leaking for three years into the stream and carrying on out into the open sea and unfortunately the Council is getting the blame for this, ie, we as public representatives are having to listen to this day in and day out and rightly so. But it's not our issue. I am asking the Chief Executive to please get this resolved. The last indication I had, which was going back in the summer was that the environmental section of Wicklow County Council, the local engineer had all been on site and identified this, with HSE officials and that this was going to be resolved. The road had been dug up and any diesel that was underneath the road surface was taken out. We are at the end of the year and these kids are still having to commute around what I believe is an unsafe road to bring them the 6 kilometres around. The insurance company for the HSE were supposed to pick up the tab for this. That is what insurance is for. The belief was that Wicklow County Council would go ahead and restore this road network and reclaim the insurance. If the Minister for Health could just talk to his own department and talk to the people who he has his insurance with and get this resolved and stop pointing the finger back at Wicklow County Council, I am asking the Chief Executive to please get this short road network reinstated, so these children can go to school safely. It's almost a year now, Cathaoirleach, it's unacceptable.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Snell. Cllr Tom Fortune.

CLLR FORTUNE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Just apologies about my camera, it's not working for a number of reason, one is I am under the weather, so I am not at the usual spot I use it. Just a couple of thing, three things in particular. This is for the Chief Executive, the stretch of area between the car park at the sea front in Kilcoole and Newcastle which incorporates the breaches, that has been a serious problem ongoing every year and there was a lot of problems in the last six or seven or eight months. Here we are again and it's kicked off again. There was a panic situation over

the weekend and my understanding is that, minister Harris and O' Donovan have been in touch with Wicklow County Council and there is funding to be able to do what needs to be done and there seems to be, I am led to believe there is a blockage on it. The main thing is that it's a serious problem for people living on the Sea Road in Newcastle and all the people living on the seafront in Kilcoole. There is a simple solution. I mean I have a file of paperwork in the council on all of this and it's a question of just sitting down with an individual over at the airfield and this could all be solved to everyone's satisfaction until proper funding is put in place for a much bigger project. So I think at this stage it's gone beyond a joke, so I would ask the Chief Executive to engage with minister Harris and O' Donovan to get this sorted. The second thing which has been mentioned, this whole area of affordable housing. There is a massive demand for affordable housing and the Government spokespeople have made numerous pronouncements about all of this happening and how it's going to happen. Yet, when the executive of the Council are trying to describe it to us they are struggling because they seem to not have all the information, they are probably not being told that. I am not blaming them at all, but obviously the information on this has not been explained to them properly. Because I haven't heard any clear response on what is happening with affordable housing. We had a meeting at our own district about a project that incorporates a good number of affordable housing but it was unclear how that is going to happen and the last point I would mention and it's been mentioned by six or seven councillors, this whole idea of councillors communication and input. I think I would agree with what was said. I think Cllr Mullen made an interesting observation. Really there is a pandemic-level now of councillors being basically bypassed, I think as councillors we really need to open our eyes and address this, because that is exactly what is happening. I think Cllr Mullen in particular succinctly described the situation. So I think that is an urgent matter and it should be addressed. Thank you, Chair.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. There is a few questions there, I might bring in John, first of all on Kilmullen Lane. Are you there?

JOHN: I am. That is an issue I will have to look in and take that up with the district engineer concerned and see what the, what can be done there to move things along.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, thank you. Then there is a couple of housing questions there, Declan.

DECLAN: In particular the affordable housing. I suppose it's an evolving situation and we are getting information from the department on an ongoing basis. So we are going to be working on that, there is a workshop tomorrow that I will be attending on our housing delivery action plan and, as I say, there were some details published last week on how we can apply for, to the affordable housing fund, so there is some work to be done on that, but we do have plans for a number of sites for affordable housing that we hope to progress.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Chief Executive, I might bring you in on the questions around the wind farms and the community benefit and also, I suppose, communication in terms of funding projects.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. We are already working on a submission on that community gain initiative raised so we will take on board what you were saying. We were going to make the same points ourselves but we do agree completely with that. If we are going to be the most effective and they are on the coast of Wicklow then Wicklow should be getting the lion's share of the community gain. I agree with that completely. Cllr Kavanagh, yes, we will be doing an audit of what is required in each Municipal District. We are doing one in

Greystones at the moment, but we will certainly have a look at possible sites as well. We do lease a lot of pitches to sporting clubs but I hear what you are saying in terms of the smaller organisations and clubs. In relation to the breaches, Cllr Fortune, I know Mark Devereaux is meeting with the national parks and wildlife service. They can do the work without going through the process of the environmental assessment report. I am not sure if Mark is on, he might give further information on that.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Mark are you with us?

MARK: Yes, can you hear me?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Very, you are very low volume.

MARK: Can you hear me now?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Yes, go ahead.

MARK: Very briefly, what I am trying to do is get the two agencies the national parks and wildlife services and the OPW to come together and agree what has to be done. I have had several meetings with them, I am hoping in the next several weeks they will agree that the, what the national parks and wildlife service can do. They are awaiting some details from their hydrologist as well. I am working on it. The only way of doing works in the short-term is to get the national parks and wildlife services to get them together in relation to that. I have a call in to the OPW, which I am expecting in the next couple of days.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, thank you. Cllr Dermot O'Brien.

CLLR D O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Just two points. First one on the amphitheatre landing in Bray. Two things on that, people have spoke to it, but the first principle of placemaking is that the community is the expert. So I have never had anyone ask for something like that to be developed in Bray. When I read a Facebook post about it, I think about a group who have been lobbying for a skate park for a decade and wondering what they need to do to be considered. They were told the seafront was out of bounds for the skate park. They were the people who have been lobbying us but an amphitheatre drops in out of nowhere. It's not good practice in terms of how we operate.

Second one is in terms of Bray and the Cold Weather Initiative is San Remo going to represent a response to the Cold Weather Initiative given the set-up for rough sleepers has changed and the Cold Water Initiative has changed and the San Remo homeless service has been put in. But are we going to look after rough sleepers who have a different criteria to those who are entering into the San Remo facility, go through a process where as the cold weather initiative might be just to support those who might be rough sleeping.

CATHAOIRLEACH: There is sleeve members looking to come in. First one is Cllr Miriam Murphy.

CLLR MURPHY: Two things. First of all I would like to support what Cllr Kennedy spoke about from the Arklow Municipal District regarding the 10% ring-fenced. I would like to say that hasn't been answered to him yet. Also, just going back on the communication or lack of communication through the councils, that very easily solved. We are all available by email, phone and sitting here, we have five Cathaoirleachs and if they don't want to ring all the other members we are the spokespersons for our members so I think that should be considered as well. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Paul O'Brien.

CLLR P O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Sorry for coming in again, it's not something I normally do, but I asked a specific question in my first outing here about staff personnel in terms of engineers and contractors coming in. I spoke to them about Kilmullen Lane. Not in our area, but we all know someone who travels the road and I was given assurance that the contracts have been signed and the road will be reopened next month. I thought it was important to say that. Can I be associated with Cllr Cronin's comments about the emergency services and put on the record and condemn the antisocial behaviour that occurred in Wicklow Town last night.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Gerry Walsh.

CLLR WALSH: On that, I have been raising this matter with our district engineer and as recently as I say last Tuesday when I raised it again I will be given assurance that the tendering and procurement processes have been complete, works to start in November to be completed by December. So that was positive news on that front.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Teresa O'Brien are you there, you might take the question on San Remo?

TERESA: I have been in discussion with Dublin Simon about the cold weather initiative and using San Remo because the rooms are there. We are trying to work out the logistics of that, we will come back to the members who when have it sorted.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Finally the Chief Executive might take Paul O'Brien's question.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: [Mic off].

...URDF, we do usually have an internal team that works in the application. That consists of people who work in various different sections from engineers, technician and people who write up the application etc. Normally we do very well on those, but sometimes it does benefit to bring in an outside consultant. The example was Bray Harbour, we applied, but we did an internal application, but we did didn't get it, we brought in experts who are experts on harbours and coastal works that it made a huge difference to the application and we secured the funding. So sometimes it does benefit to bring in the outside experts and we will be doing the one for Wicklow harbour and Arklow harbour. I think it will be worthwhile to spend that extra money on people who are experts in those particular areas, but that does benefit, but as much as possible we will do them inhouse and we do have very good staff inhouse to prepare those applications. Just to Cllr Miriam Murphy, we will go to the elected members before we submit those and let people know exactly what is in them. But we need to prepare a comprehensive application first. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Finally, Cllr Patsy Glennon.

CLLR GLENNON: On a lighter note... can you hear me?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Yes.

CLLR GLENNON: On a lighter note (sound distortion).

CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, Cllr Glennon, we are struggling to hear you are, you are intermittent.

CLLR GLENNON: Obviously my colleagues have expressed their views about us not being kept up to speed on the different things but I am not going to... my signal is bad. Look, just on a lighter note, Cathaoirleach, look forward to [INAUDIBLE]... Cup, I know that won't please our district, but I am looking forward to it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Glennon, thank you.

CLLR O'NEILL: It's a lighter note, all right, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, members, thanks, we have covered the Chief Executive's report very well, I think everyone has had a good say on that. So we will move on to number 9, to receive a presentation for Customer Care Innovation Hub, I think we

have had this on the agenda for three months now. We are delighted, Gemma we have made it. I will pass over to Gemma Whitty on this.

GEMMA: Thank you, Cathaoirleach and to all the members for the invitation today to give you an update on the Customer Service Innovation Hub. As you all know the Customer Service Innovation Hub was established just over a year ago now, we have had our one year anniversary and what we are doing is we continue to improve our support services and our facilities to all the members of the public and to the organisation as well. Just to start my presentation there, starting off with some data, the data was collated in quarter two this year, so just to move on to the communication data. Just to give you an insight of what we are dealing one to date.

So the call data there has increased slightly from quart one to quarter two. Quarter two we saw over 44,000 phone calls in the quarter, which is the equivalent to 710 phone calls per day, so it's a slight rise from quarter one. Other communication channels, just to give you an update for our dedicated email addresses that are coming into the other customer services hub. They are over 4,000 in quarter so about 70 per day. Just to remind all the elected members we have set up a dedicated phone line for yourselves. There is the main phone number, but there is a dedicated phone line for yourselves which doesn't have a message and you can ring and get through to one of our advisors. Included in that we, have a dedicated email address - that will get you through directly to our cur services advisors and we anticipate to give you a reply back within the 48 hours for all of your queries there.

Elected members representational request for quarter two, we received approximately 390 requests, so just over six a day. The requests are acknowledged and they are recorded on our Microsoft Dynamic CRM system and responded back with your case number to be followed up if needed. Dealing with the large volume of post and internal post coming in due to increases with the pandemic in the last year-and-a-half. Volumes are approximately 175 items per day. Just to go back then to our Microsoft Dynamics CRM system. As you know that underpins the service that we provide in our Customer Service Hub that is our IT system log our calls and our cases. We are continuing to roll this out throughout the organisation, as I said, it starts off with the Customer Service Hub and it's been rolled out incrementally in our Municipal Districts at the moment and in our housing department, environment and so it's working quite well. We will continue to roll it out to other directorates in our organisation, incrementally. Just to give you an idea of the breakdown from our CRM cases for our department, I know it's hard to see there, but as you can see the difference cases, the housing area is our highest demand area.

HEATHER 1530-1600.

It gives an idea of breakdown for the CRM cases for the department, the different cases, the housing area is our highest demand area. That is broken down further on the next page. You can see the cases and the areas of the different districts and directives broken down, going out to the housing and the large amount there, so we deal with a huge volume of inquiries in relation to social inquiries, housing inquiries, HAP cases and they are all CRMs, and the customers get the number there is. And we are continuing to improve, to increase the services within the CRM to improve the

cases in the background and to modify where necessary, which is ongoing, underpinned by the service catalogue put in place by the LGMA.

To give an update on the public counters, they have been consistently been available throughout the pandemic previously by appointment only, that has changed from the beginning of August. We were open then without appointments so our customers can come in and all members of the public can come in during the opening hours. So great to see that has increased dramatically. and modes of taxation, from Q2, the transactions were 966, so about 16 per day. During the period when we had appointments only. Since then we looked back on the last week, and because of appointments stopped and they are able to come in when open, the transactions increased from 76 to up to 196, so increase of 100% in foot fall for motor tax. And similar, revenue, increased by 29% so, a lot more foot fall coming in and serving many more members at our public counters which is great to see as well.

Our housing counters are open to the public as well, receiving 10 appointments in the last Q2 and planning service 114 during that quarter at well. Housing applications admitted to the County Wicklow to the hub, where they are there and validated. Q2 we had about 343 application, validated and recorded on the CRM system and passed down to the housing department for assessment. That is working well and the customers are notified that the application is received and the status it is at. There are a few new or add-ons to the customer service. We have since August incorporated the community call helpline. That is now manned and serviced by our customer service advisers. The calls have reduced down significantly since the height of the pandemic last year. But we are there to offer full support coming in on a dedicated phonenumber so it is answered promptly.

One of the big changes over the last couple of, the last month or so is the customer service amalgamated with the back office of the motor tax section. The benefits of this amalgamation was to integrate the motor tax service. Beforehand it was fragmented and the counter service dealt by customer service, whereas postal applications dealt with in the back office. We streamlined the process and maximised staff resources to improve communication and to increase support for our customers in deals with all motor tax transactions. So that amalgamation is complete, completed two weeks ago on the 18th of October. working very, very well. Following on, all the staff are incorporated in the customer service, lots of training has taken part and there is a little on-site training still ongoing. We are lucky to have the benefit of the physical back office support space from the motor tax, the small motor Tax Office is converted, converted to a dedicated phone hub so. That the Wicklow County Council main phone line goes into a dedicated phone hub in the back office to allow for a quieter, focused environment for all calls, and management service there.

Another new facility we have taken on, which we are delighted to roll out in Wicklow County Council, is the AD caller initiative. This is able/disable call are service, it started as a grass roots initiative in Wexford County Council, they have been running it there for a few months now. We have completed all of our customer advisers completing a training programme with the Disability Federation Ireland to offer additional support for an AD caller, the person who may have a disability when they ring in to their local authority to get additional support, additional service or a maintenance query. So, we try to prioritise their calls, we try to allow them to take more time, a little more patient, and we have liaised with the municipal districts to prioritise any maintenance or service calls that they can roll out as well, that is

launched in the customer service in Wicklow County Council, we are delighted to have that on board as well.

Just to give you an update on one of our internal policies. I'm in charge of looking at our new customer service action plan. The customer service strategy to replace our customer action plan 2006, we established a working group in Wicklow County Council to oversee this draft policy.

It is, we are creating this policy in line with guidelines set out by the Quality Customer Service Network, underpinned by the public service 2020 all sections in the districts have been contacted. We have a single point of contact for each one to get their input and to streamline collaboration on the strategy. To date, completing the introduction and the customer details, we have incorporated 12 principles and 12 principles to be incorporating several goals and objectives to reach with our new customer service strategy. The Customer Charter is complete. We will have that commence shortly on a new customer complaints policy as well and we are liaising with the ombudsman on that and guidelines from the LGMA. We are currently creating a draft questionnaire to be sent out to the members of the public for public consultation on the strategy and also our internal customers as well, that it will be sent out shortly.

Also, just to give you a brief update on the LGMA service catalogue, to mention it briefly. It does underpin our customer service CRM system. The LGMA worked with all 31 local authorities over the last 3 years to create the service catalogue. What it is a dedicated website for members of the public to go in, to look at their own local authority, to see if there is a particular service available in their own local authority. So, that, a lot of work has been done on that in the last three years, almost complete. It has been updated and all verified by each local authority and that will be launched soon by the LGMA to go into the launch phase over the next couple of years. It will be a very good service for the members of the public if they are at all, to go online to the website to put in the service that they require to see, to see if it is available in their own local authority.

Just another advisory group to give you an update on, it is the RAG, the LGMA research advisory group. It is for the customer service survey for all local authorities. Previously looked after and commissioned by NOAC after the last year they did a 3-year customer service survey, now taken over by the LGMA to run over the next couple of years. The LGMA commissioned a working group, which is the Research Advisory Group and Wicklow County Council have, have nominated a person to be on the group to roll this out. The RAG, the Research Advisory Group, have researched proposals on a survey that is complete, and tendered for a company to be a commissioner of the survey to roll this out nationally. And then further they will look at case studies of best practice to be rolled out at the end of this year or next year. The Red Sea, won the tender for the survey, they have been working with us over a couple of months on progressing and they've created one of the services for awareness of how people in the community are aware of what their local authorities provide. They have collated that data and this are finalising that into a report for us at the moment as well. They have moved on to do test pilots in local authorities, so, anyone who is on the group have done a test pilot here in Wicklow County Council, we did a test pilot of a very small survey, for motor tax customers, that was launched, we did it on Friday, we are doing that today, over a two-day period, and we will be able to get a bit of research on the test pilots to go to the national survey coming forward in the next couple of months.

Lastly, I wanted to give you a breach update on the communications, I know it is a couple of months now but because we didn't get to give you an update on your council day and the LGMA may have issued recently analyst reports on how all the local authorities did over your Council Day. I'm delighted to say that Wicklow County Council posted 474 posts on the day. Mainly a Twitter campaign but we posted on all social media websites and channels, that was up 15% from 2020. And it featured over Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. It showcases the fantastic work and achievements done by the Wicklow County Council staff and other local authorities and how we are contributing to the county's development and social and economic recovery and to mention that County Wicklow were the top authors of tweets for an individual local authority on that day.

And we also had the most amount of tweets for an individual local authority that day and also of our social media channels increased at different percentages, and Facebook 22.5%, [distortion of sound]

Lastly, to make you aware that Wicklow County Council were invited to submit sub missions for the LAN All Ireland Community and Council awards for 2021, delighted to submit 19 of excellent projects to the awards. And found out last week we have been shortlisted for 17 projects to go towards the final on the 27th of November. You can see the list of the projects there in a wide range of categories and hopefully we will do well on the night.

That's a brief update. I would like to thank you for your time and if you have questions, I will be here. Thank you very much.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Gemma. A comprehensive report.

Before I bring the members in, I want to compliment the staff of the customer hub for their professionalism and courtesy shown to the public. Since the customer hub has been put in place, this is no doubt that the public are greeted by a, definitely a more professional council here. I think it is something that we should be proud of.

I suppose, in terms of the few points, I wanted to make, obviously, housing demands a huge amount of time in terms of resources on the hub. The question that I have: Do we have sufficient staff to deal with the amount of inquiries? If one of the issues that comes to me regularly, is it tends to be hard to get some of the staff in the general housing office and I'm sure there, they are snowed under with work. So, it is a query that comes to me. And secondly, the point I want to make, the planning, there are 130 meetings from April to June, does it require a member of planning staff to be on hand with each of those? Or is it a case where the public are coming in just looking at planning files? I would like to say that. And my final point, I believe, I have brought it up before, that I think that all staff in Wicklow County Council, should answer the phone by giving their name. I think, you know, we are a professional organisation. I think, what it does, it relaxes, certainly people ringing in to the council to know that somebody is taking the time to give their name and it is sometimes, if there is a contention issue or call, it can relax the situation there and then. So, think in terms of professionalism again, we have set ourselves very high standards, I think that every member of Wicklow County Council should answer the phone by actually saying who they are. Just a couple of points to make. I will open it up to the floor.

The first person to bring in a Councillor John Mullen.

CLLR MULLEN: As a new coupler given a tour of the building, we were introduced to the idea of the customer innovation hub. I remember myself and others were blown away. We thought it would be excellent as an initiative. I must admit it is one of the most positive experiences I have had in this local authority. While I can be

critical of the systemic and construal deficits, this gives me reason for a bit of hope. I do think it is excellent you have an elected representation, and a particular email address, the fact when we ring in, somebody knows your name. It can sometimes take the heat off the pressure, when somebody says, "Hello, John, who would you like to talk to today?" It is very professional. It gives me hope. Probably so successful, I wonder, and maybe these are difficult questions you cannot answer or maybe the Chief Executive may like to come in on them but I know without naming names that sometimes there has been push back. We were asked as councillors not to go through the emails on certain items as they were under a pressure themselves. I wonder do any of my colleagues encounter this? And secondly, the evidence produced with regards to the previous comments, you can see the second highest amount of reps coming in via the innovation hub is on housing and maintenance. So does that data go to the corporate policy group when making budgetary decisions? That should be evidence based public oil policy there? Yet it is not filtering through to the budgetary decisions or does not seem to be filtering through to the budgetary decisions made yet we are generating the data. I have nothing but praise for it, the more it rolls out the better and thank you for this.

CLLR FORTUNE: Thank you for the presentation, Gemma. Very good. I find yourself and your team extremely helpful when you ring in, you are looked after, if you can't take a call, you will call back. I must say, I have nothing but good things to say with that, good luck. But to make a point, not to confuse with the problem raised earlier with the by passing of councillors to note that there are separate members commented on an issue account during the CEO report and no response, which happens every month. The last point, this is a rumour circulating, I have heard from 6 different sources not relating to Wicklow County Council, there are staff movements happening within the local authority and we as the public reps have not been informed which also makes a point as well.

Thank you.

CLLR SNELL: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I want to thank Gemma for the presentation. If I can just take the members back to two years ago when the decision was made in the Chambers here with regards to investing in the customer hub and also the Chambers, and it was not an easy decision at the time as obviously funding would have been looked for in other departments. But it was time that we invested in Wicklow County Council and what we present to the public. I know from constituents and the general public, that all of the feedback that we are getting is very positive. To take on board that the staff work through the COVID, the pandemic, now that it is open to the general public, the people who are getting in here, not only are they meeting friendly faces and people who are presenting well to them, and putting them in the right direction but you have a friendly environment for the staff to work in. It is like managing a football team, as some of you know, you can get them new jerseys, cut the grass and put them on the pitch but you may not always get the performance but the reality is we are getting the performance. When I listen to what Gemma is saying with regards to looking at a customer action plan, the customer service strategy, the advisory group, they are not sitting back on laurels, they are working hard and I concur with previous speakers in regards to feeding that back to senior management. If I can just particularly single out, a decision that Gemma herself took on board before the summer in regards to when she was contacted about the AD caller campaign, and the initiative that was rolled out by Wexford County Council, I call on the members that we could send this and forward it with Gemma's blessing on how Wicklow County Council have inducted this into our

everyday service. I think that all local authorities should be given the blueprint that County Wicklow have taken on board. I know you are in contact with Wexford County Council, I know from the campaigners themselves, it actually, it costs nothing. It costs nothing to really implement this, other than the training. But the effect it has on people with disabilities to make contact with a local authority, you can't measure that. And the feedback that I'm getting from people, is just to pass on, to pass on best wishes and to continue what you are doing and if we can as a local authority, to follow that, as with all councils throughout Ireland as it is an absolutely fantastic campaign and initiative and again, well done to you and to the staff.

CLLR LEONARD: I wanted to congratulate Gemma and the whole team. Obviously with a strong team working together. It is fantastic. I have no complaints about the services that I have used there at all. [distortion of sound] a few questions, on the system itself, and maybe I have missed it in the presentation but I want to know, what percentage of the overall communication has gone through the customer services and is there a lot of emails still going through to direct emails to the different departments still to get a figure on that? And just the survey that you are putting out, that maybe it can be distributed to the councillors and maybe the staff, it is brilliant you have the team there and the review, and the people that work on the ground, know best how to improve it and to keep moving it forward, to tweak it and to make it efficient as to do as councillor Mullen says to look at the figures and improve the budget there. And if the Chief Executive can look at resources and where they are concentrated and maybe we can look to move some resources from other places and shift them round accordingly. Lastly in relation to the area, the physical space itself, I did bring up initially when we were given the presentation it would be great to see some of the local art and crafters across the county celebrated in the new hub there maybe on the walls and in display cases and stuff, maybe that is something that the Chief Executive may consider to incorporate into the space. Thank you.

CLLR SCOTT: Thank you, Cathaoirleach and Gemma, to concur with everything that has been said before. It is a great development. You have great plans for it going forward. I just had a quick, specific question, Gemma, I wonder if you can answer, in terms of providing sign language interpretation services, is that facility available for those who would need it? And how are these booked? Is it flagged on the website? How would people go about this if they have to access services if they are Hard of Hearing? It is something that I have brought up a couple of times and I know you did have plans to integrate it into the customer hub. Thank you.

CLLR MURPHY: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Again, I agree with all the sentiments of the other councillors it is fantastic to see this. I would like to thank Gemma for going with the initiative that, and the proposal that the Cllr Kavanagh brought in about the ADA assistance call it opens up so much poverty for Wicklow County Council but also gives the person with the disability their right to speak for themselves without having someone else to speak for them in their capacity as a person and as a right. It is not just, you know, it just opens up that right to speak for yourselves, to have that confidence knowing that somebody is trained and understanding of the situation and that person. From the bottom of my heart, I am so proud of Wicklow County Council, again, taking the initiative. I would also like to thank all the staff who are taking part in the disability training from our relationship with the DFI and the Disability Inclusion Committee. It is fantastic. Fantastic to know that we have moved on. That people who are really, really overloaded with their work at Wicklow County Council, are taking the time to, I suppose, to come into another world, that maybe we

have not thought about or they have not thought about and the understanding of a person with a disability and again, I am so proud of Wicklow County Council. I really mean that.

Just one question on the context of our emails and whatever. I mean, I just feel, even though we know we send in emails to the regs and we see the direct line to the hub, I still sometimes think we have to follow-up on that. I would like to know, can we improve a little on that. As it is frustrating to be at the other end. I'm not getting no sponsor just to say to have an acknowledgement, as we still don't get a follow-up on that, so but that is just an issue, thank you so much.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Glennon.

CLLR GLENNON: No, the signal is too poor. I will pass today.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Just to pass back to Gemma. Lots of poverty. Not too many questions.

GEMMA: Thank you all for the poverty and the ongoing support of the customer service hub. As I said, we are just over a year established. We are constantly trying to look at ways to improve the service and to increase the facilities to the public. With your support, we are doing that, over the time and we will continue to do so. To address the few of the questions, I hope that I have them all here. Regarding enough staff and for the housing issues and the housing repairs and the maintenance and the housing inquiries, that are clearly showing it is the highest demand area with our Microsoft Dynamic CRM system. We have a highly trained members of advisers in customer service. Recently with the amalgamation of the back office motor tax we acquired additional staff members there. Each staff members and customer service advisers, they are nominated as liaison officers for directorate and districts for each directorate and municipal district, we have one adviser who is a liaison officers for housing and planning and so on and so forth. That is a system that is working well. So one point of can contact who liaising directly with housing and gets regular updates from the housing directorate and is good relationship with the senior executive officer and staff members who keep us updated all the time so if there is anything that is happening, new policies that are launched we get them directly with the customer liaison officer and they are distributed to the team on a weekly basis so we are kept informed and can pre-empt a lot of things before it happens. With regards to the question on planning. That is Q2, the statistics there, 113. That was in Q2, where there was the appointment based system. That was the appointment planning facilitated during Q2 with a dedicated member of the planning department facilitating that meeting planning. And the planning directorate normally operating their counter and meetings themselves so, that is the statistics for Q2. With regards the suggestion for the phone calls and the names, I think it is very important.

Our customer advisers are trained to answer the phones and to give their name and we also have the extra things like the name badge that helps when they come in for face-to-face as it is important to be able to identify and people do like a contact name. That is another objective to be rolled out in the customer service strategy as well to be clearly identified.

Regarding the amount of emails that are coming in. We do have a large volume of emails coming in. We have, as I said, the dedicated email address, our general email address and two liaison officers, one who is mainly in charge of managing the REPC email addresses and the other is general. Split in two so that the work is divided equally. The benefit of that if there is an email sent to us, it is recorded, logged and

recorded on the CRM system and case numbers given to all inquiries. There is still a direct email address for other direct traits, that some people go to directly but we encourage everyone to come to the central point so that everything is logged and recorded. and the point that

Miriam made, a follow-up if you need it, if you have not had a response within a time frame, you can give us a call on the phone line, to quote the case number and we will be happy to follow-up on inquiries for you as well.

The point that Miriam made, if you haven't had a response, you can always give us a call on a phone line. Quote the case number and we will be happy to follow up on any queries for you as well. Just regarding the AD call, we are delighted that Wicklow County Council are rolling that out. We are waiting for the grassroots champions in Wexford County Council, hopefully they will be able to pay us a visit. Over the next month we are hoping to welcome some of the champions from Wexford, so they will be able to give us a few extra things to promote the initiative like stickers and we will be able to launch it on our website over the next coming weeks as well. So we are looking forward to that. Regarding Cllr Scott, the sign language interpretation services, I have been working quite a lot on that, creating a policy document and we have been working with the Disability Federation Ireland and the Sign Language Association we have been in contact with them several times and we are at the final stages of rolling that out. What we are work on at the moment is a promotional video we can have on our website and the Irish Sign Language Association are going to sign that. We are hoping that will be launched by the ebb of the year. It will be a great facility, we have all the information technology already available we have all the laptops and the confidential meeting room for anyone if they wish to book an appointment for sign language interpretation and we will be rolling out training with staff. That is the next thing after the policy is complete. So hopefully we will have that up and running soon.

Just for Cllr Leonard, the physical space is a very good idea. The physical space we are, as I said, after all the refurbishment is more or less complete new and we are hopefully going to install some sort of display areas in our civic space so, we can display some of the awards and arts and crafts of our county, that is actually quite a good idea. I think, Cathaoirleach, I have most of the questions, apologies if I have missed any?

CATHAOIRLEACH: I just have one more member wanting to come in. Cllr O'Neill. Cllr Gerry O'Neill.

CLLR O'NEILL: Can you hear me?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Go ahead.

CLLR O'NEILL: Yes, sorry, Shay, just briefly there, I again like to thank Gemma for her presentation and I like to say fair play to the customer service desk. The group there are a great group of people and very helpful. It is a huge success. There is one issue I would like to mention that I know that we all, as councillors we deal with people on the housing list and homelessness and whatever and it can be very stressful. I know that the pressure that the housing section in Wicklow is under huge pressure and, I do think maybe you should be looking at it as regards the staff levels and if they could be improved there, because I know my dealings over the last while with the housing section is they are under big pressure and I know that with Covid and the people working out of the office, it's again it doesn't help things, but it's not a

criticism of the housing section, but I think that maybe it should be looked at as regards the housing levels. And Shay, could I just say, by the way, if you have any influence with broadband will you look after Hollywood before Patsy Glennon cracks up there?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Gemma very much. I suppose before you finish, I will pass on our best interests from everyone to the team in general on the good work they are doing and I think we have certainly upped their standards across the Council and long may it continue. Well done to everyone.

GEMMA: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, thank you, members.

CATHAOIRLEACH: On to item 10 to receive a presentation for river water quality. I think we have Jonathan Sexton with us.

JONATHAN: Hi, folks can you hear me?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Yeah. Go ahead.

JONATHAN: Great.

So it's just to give you an update on the most recent EPA water quality reports. What I put together is the Wicklow picture as compared to the national picture, because I think that is important. Can you go to the next slide, please? So this is the most recent report on water quality. You have probably seen this before, it's not great in that only 53% of our rivers and lakes and estuaries and coastal waters are at the required status. In other words at good, or high. It's not considered good enough, the water framework Directive states that you have to have 100%.

Since 2015, river water quality nationally has declined by 5.5%. It's a worrying trend. I will go into that a little bit in the next couple of slides. In Wicklow, it's a good news story in that in recent times water quality has improved by about 7%. We are now at about 64% of our water bodies. That is river, lake, estuaries, coastal waters and ground waters are at good or high status. Next slide, please. So when you look at that over time then you will see that there is four bar graphs there, they are covering different timeframes. When the Water Framework Directive first started, the first status covered the period of 2007 to 2009. You can see that the coloured bars you are interested in there are the blue and the green. When you add that up that is about 60% at good or better. Then you can see there is 37% weren't at good status, they were at moderate and 3% were at poor and 1% was at bad. Then, when you look at the next status period, which covers 2010 to 2012, it's a very similar picture. Then we declined in the period from 2010 and 2015. I will come back to that also in a little while. In the most recent assessment by the EPA we have jumped back and in fact we have jumped beyond where we started, which is always a nice thing to see. We are now currently at about 64%. That is when you add up that 12% there in the blue and the 52% in the green.

In 2021, the EPA released the most recent trends in water quality and they showed that their river biology monitoring. This is where they do the sampling in the rivers, when they got into Wicklow in 2020, there was more improvements. When we push this when we see the status when they assign it, we do that in 2020 in the summer. That will probably push us up to 70% of the water bodies at good or better. That is really welcome when you think the national trend suspect going that well.

So really you can see that currently when you look at the number of water bodies we have 13 high status water bodies. They are pristine, 58 good, 33 moderate, 6 poor and 2 bad. The red is the cut off line, you have to be good or high. The rest doesn't

cut it. So just to mention the high status water bodies, Wicklow would have been one of the (sound distortion) high status water bodies and we are losing them. In the recent 2020 data from the EPA we have a few more of those back, which is another welcome trend.

Next slide, please. That is just a map there, which you can all view on catchments.ie, if you Google it. You can query any water body you are interested in. It's all that stage colour coding for us. So green and blue is good or high. Then yellow and red or orange we are not quite there. You can see Avoca down there in red. There is a list for you of the water bodies that have improved in the most recent EPA report. You can see the number of high status water bodies that we have gained, so Goldmine, Avonmore, Coolboy, they have all gone from good or moderate status, which is really encouraging. There is have you few of those pristine water bodies around at the moment. Then we also see a number of water bodies that were at moderate status which is slightly polluted. Rivers like the Brittas and the Liffey, or the Ow, Avonmore, the one near Laragh. The Derry water, Coolboy and the Slaney, the Moy and the Dargle.

That is a nice one to see bounce up, because it was a water body which had been impacted at the time of the flood protection works, because they were doing a lot of instream work on the river bed. Since that has gone from poor to moderate it has come back to good, the EPA have informed us about. That is another great trend. Then, these are the lists of the water bodies that have deteriorated. You will always get some going up, it's like top of the pops, you will have some on the way up and some on the way down. That is the way it works with rivers. Newtownmountkennedy rivers, that is above the top of that, that is disappointment, it's one of our pristine and it's a blue dot water body. It means it has targets for high status and we are not allowed to let that below. The same with the [Vartry](#). Upstream of the dams. I mention the Bann there, because it starts in Wicklow, but it goes as far as, it only starts in Wicklow, but really it's a Wexford water body. It deteriorates from high to moderate, which is disappointing. It has since bounced back and come back to high status as has the [Vartry](#).

Also the Newtownmountkennedy we did a bit of investigating on that. The remained, the Kings and the Ballydonnell, they are up in the Wicklow mountains. That is a poor sign, they are in forestry areas and they are two water bodies that were always pristine and they deteriorated over the last number of years. They are being actively felled at the moment. The Newcastle River has deteriorated from food to moderate and it's since gone to poor in the most recent assessment in 2020. So that is one we have listed to be in the river basis. It's mostly in dill care, but we have the head waters and we have been working with the Dunlavin waste water treatment plant was improved. So, we could go on and on but time is of the essence, so we will go to the next slide.

I will just, this was the 2020 report from the Environmental Protection Agency. It was just a supplementary report before they do their next assessment in 2021. I won't go into too much detail, but they are trying to give us the overall trends here. They are saying that the most recent trends in 20 are showing improvements of biology nationally, not just in Wicklow. But there is some very worrying trends in nutrient pollution. I have a couple of good examples but it's not good in the south. They produced an infographic to give you a summary of their findings. This is a very useful

one, if you get a copy of the presentation, this is the one stop shop to find out how things are going. Again it's nationally. It shows that some rivers have been improving but some are deteriorating but there has been an overall improvement in 2020.

That said our lakes are deteriorating in quality again, it's not going well for the lakes. Coastal waters are pretty good, but estuary aren't great. The nutrient load is increasing. That is a significant one, it comes back to the levels in rivers. So whatever is happening in the upper catchment, it all ends up down the bottom where the estuary is. Unfortunately phosphorus and nitrate are increasing nationally into our estuaries. Again time is of the essence, I showed you these not to confuse you, but just to give you a snapshot of what happens with nitrate on a national scale. Again the Environmental Protection Agency provided these maps. The map on the left side shows you the nitrate average concentrations in rivers nationally each dot is part of the national monitoring framework. Where you see the congregation of blue and green in Wicklow, that is acceptable levels of nitrate in rivers, if you come south and you are looking at Wexford and Waterford and Tipperary and Kilkenny, you see a lot of orange levels which show that it's too high. When you look at the level on the right side of the picture, you don't have to worry about blue and green here, they are trying to show you the trend over a seven-year period from 2013 to 2030 for nitrates. Yellow dot indicates no change for that. You will see in Wicklow there is a lot of yellow dots, so the nitrates changes in most of Wicklow's rivers aren't changing. You will see some orange dots, that is where the trend is increasing. That is in rivers like the Newtownmountkennedy river, the Red Cross river, the Three-Mile Water, the Ballyduff River.

Then, if you look, at on the national scale, at Kilkenny, Wexford, Waterford, Tipperary, the numbers are going through the roof. That, when you look at the sale of nitrogen fertiliser and you map that against national herd size and you map it again with another graph for the monitoring nitrogen emissions into waters nationally there is a relationship between all of them. You can see it peaked in the early 90s, then it declined towards 2010 when times were toughed. But since the milk quotas are gone and herd quotas are increasing you can see the incline upwards. That is what you are seeing in the last map. That is worrying. That is why the Nitrates Action Plan is being reviewed by the department and they are putting in guidelines, they are trying to keep the nitrogen, off the land when there is no uptake.

Next slide, please. That is a similar map for phosphates in water. It's another nutrient. Again in Wicklow you can see a lot of blue and green dots. Thankfully in Wicklow we don't have much phosphorus. Nationally you have to look at the poor south and Kilkenny, Carlow and parts of Waterford and you are seeing increases. Next slide, please.

In 2020 the EPA gave us an indicator of how things are going with biology. They gave a breakdown nationally of the local authority areas for the quality of rivers. That is where they get in and do this sampling every three years where they look at the insects in the rivers. Thanks.

Wicklow is right up there, probably leading the pack with Cork in that we have the highest proportion of rivers at good or high status. Can you see that? About 83% of our rivers are at good or high biological quality. That doesn't take into account all of the other things we monitor like PH or hydro morphology indicators. It shows how

lucky we are to have such a clean resource by and large throughout the county and we are very lucky to have it.

You have probably all seen this before, this is how the pressures are signed by the Environmental Protection Agency. They look at all the main pressures in the country and they assign them. Agriculture is not surprising, because it's the biggest land use. Another one is being moved up the ranks is hydro morphology. It's something which has had a lot work on in recent times. It's more to do with the recent assessment than anything else, but it's going to be the priority. Wicklow County Council are working with LAWPRO and the east Wicklow rivers trust to remove that. Hopefully we will have an update for you soon on that.

Next slide, please. So this is what Wicklow County Council does for water. You know there is about six of us in the pollution control team and we do a lot of farm surveys, licensed discharge of septic tanks to water and farm inspections. We also co-operate with LAWPRO, the local water community programme office. We also work with the East Wicklow River Trust and Donal O'Keeffe to try and promote water quality in the county. We also carry out assessments to try and find out the cause of water quality, these deteriorations. The ones you have listed up above we either hand them over to the catchment in LAWPRO as a priority or take them on over the next six years.

Next slide, please. Just to cut to the chase here, what happens next is that all of that status and risk assessments carried out by the Environmental Protection Agency for our waters are fed into the next river basin management plan. That draft has now been published and is available for consultation. Donal O'Keeffe I think is with us and I hope he might give you a brief introduction to that. It's vital that we get your comments on the next management plan. It's vital we get as much public participation as possible. Thank you for your time.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Jonathan, for a very comprehensive report. I think I will just bring in Breege Kilkenny. Are you there?

BREEGE: Thank you very much, I just wanted to add just from Jonathan's presentation and as you can see that Wicklow is not just bucking the trend, but really leading the pack. I just wanted to point out that this hasn't happened by accident and we have an extremely dedicated work team within pollution control. It's not just that it's their job, they are passionate about this issue of water quality and a large part of it has been their work on the ground, working with the farmers, the awareness campaigns, working with LAWPRO and as the Cathaoirleach has said we bring on Donal O'Keeffe, who is the representative on this, but that the river quality work is not just the only job that the pollution control has to do, as Jonathan pointed out, they are monitoring septic tanks and a whole lot of other issues.

Despite that they work on the ground and that whole communication and campaign awareness is really important. Even yourself, Cathaoirleach, you had asked for the team to meet with the local farming community to address this issue of water quality and that has happened. That education piece that we don't have to use unnatural fertilisers. Working with the farmers and I think that is one of the single issues which has brought Wicklow to the top of the pile, just in terms of the quality of water within our county and how that stands above all the other local authorities within the country. That is just what I wanted to say and maybe now Donal O'Keeffe might

come in and talk about the river basin management plan and the implications now coming forward. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Donal, do you want to add anything there?

DONAL: Yes, thank you very much, can you hear me okay? I suppose, I just wanted to raise awareness and thank you very much, Breege, for the introduction and I concur with Jonathan and the team on pollution control that I worked with previously. They are a terrific bunch in there and they are doing great work on our rivers and lakes. Just wanted to raise awareness of the Draft Basin Management Plan, that public consultation is open at the moment. It's a national plan that aims to protect and restore good water quality in our rivers, lakes, estuaries, ground water and coastal waters. It's for the benefit of our health biodiversity, climate and our communities.

So, I am not too sure if the slides are available there? But basically I just wanted to say that the plan, I suppose the main aim, the themes in the plan were to increase the national ambition to halt the decline in water quality and reverse the damage. Integrated catchment management planning will be implemented in the plan. There is going to be greater co-ordination between estate agent agencies, local authorities in LAWPRO and its main aim is to deliver benefits to climate change and local communities. The main thing I like to focus on is there is a visual consultation room available, I can send you on the details after this, as part of the minutes perhaps. But you can apply for making a submission through paper format, through myself, we will have local meetings in each Municipal District after Christmas, all going well once Covid, I suppose alleviates, hopefully a little bit after Christmas we can have face-to-face meetings in each district. We will have an online meeting with PPN members on the 24th of November. So I have been talking to Helen on that, that will be rolled out, so that will be with the PPN members and you can make submissions also to info@lawaters.ie

or post to local authority water programmes, so I can send on those different details to the councillors on how the public consultations can be undertaken and I would like to thank you for listening, but we will have meetings and there will be, I suppose, I will be on the radio and on to the councillors when those meetings were taking place, but at the moment they all have to be cancelled until, I suppose Covid conditions allow for safe undertaking of them. That is it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Donal. First member up is Cllr Edward Timmins.

CLLR TIMMINS: Thank you, Jonathan and Donal for the presentation. I just wonder, is there any angle on the information you have and the surveys you have done to promote the idea of investment in infrastructure in small towns and villages? Like certainly in this part of the county and I am sure it's pretty true across the county, but in the west of the county there has been no investment in the last 15 years in water and sewage, about 15 or 16 years ago Stratford and Donard got some investment, Dunlavin about ten years ago. I consider that a larger town, we already had infrastructure. But we used the knowledge at the time, I remember Brian Doyle giving presentations about the water quality and the fact there was raw sewage going into the river in Dunlavin. That was used to help get a new sewage plant for Dunlavin. That was a bigger project, a five million project, but just great work is being done in Wicklow, but nothing has been done to improve water and waste water infrastructure in the small villages and that is a serious problem. It's also stifling their development, so I am wondering is there anything in your work that could be used to promote

investment in that side of things, because, as far as I am concerned, it's been a forgotten area over the last 15 years. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Peir Leonard.

CLLR LEONARD: As Donal and Jonathan know I am passionate about our rivers and I have been learning on the job for the last few years. I think that all of the councillors here, like there is a stretch of water nearby yourselves and I think if you could engage with your local community in your own area we could all work on this together. I found even... (sound distortion) schools are readily available to get involved in this work and they have a distribution network with the kids and the transition year students to reach their parents, a lot of which are farming communities. I don't believe in chastising the farmers we need to help them find solutions to these problems. It's great to see the good work going on, but I think it's sort of, we are strategically placed here right beside the coast here and we have projects like NORI and we have East Wicklow Rivers Trust and it's important that these projects are supported by the council and I thank Breege and the Chief Executive for supporting them the way they do, but we need more funding to support them going forward so we can make the necessary changes and support, the likes Donal and Jonathan with their work on the ground and then in combination with Irish Water's work as well. Putting in new infrastructure, because I think that a lot of the past flooding has been because we have increased our towns trifold without redoing the existing infrastructure which has been there since before many of our times on this Earth. But, that is all I want to say, thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Gerry Walsh. One second.

1630 HEATHER HERE

CLLR WALSH: It is great to see County Wicklow bucking the trend in such an important area. A quick question in relation to Jonathan referring to the Newcastle and the Newtown rivers in the decline of quality and both. I was alerted to an incident? Newcastle in August, by a local resident, there was a fish kill. I know there were investigations into that. Can Donal update that? Or is it down to being in an agriculture catchment area? And other areas that may be addressed, ultimately with the use of fertilisers but particularly in had the Newtown and Newcastle rivers decline, if there is an update on that.

CLLR O'CONNOR: Two questions on the lead organisation, it says that two will be going to local authority, I wonder if the general trend for these rivers, will the local authority be taking control of all of them? On another topic about the meeting, the councillors and all of that in the towns, I wonder if you can come to us to say: Look this is why the river [inaudible] went up and if you add quality to more resources we can keep it like this or keep it at the same level to work with you to ensure that river quality goes on and up and up an up.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Lourda Scott?

CLLR SCOTT: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, thank you for the interesting presentation. It will be positive, I suppose, to see the improvement in the quality in the County Wicklow side or at least maintaining the good quality rivers but there is a question

mark about, you know, other counties and how we progress going forward. Donal, delighted to hear about the river basin management plan open and that there are meetings planned, there are a lot of passionate community groups in my district actively involved in the monitoring of rivers and taking samples and doing a lot of zone science projects, so I hope that they will be involved in the public consultation. A specific question, that interests me as I have a culture of such an important bearing on theories and our water quality here, I wonder how much engagement there is between, I'm not sure if it is the local authority or the law pro with the IFA, with the advisers and that sort of interaction, I'm interested to hear your opinion on Ireland's nitrate action programme under review at the moment. I wonder your thoughts on that, how that review on the planned nitrate action, the future will help lead to actions being taken to address water quality. I know from a farming background myself, there is concern within the agricultural circles about the proposed changes to nitrates and to the increased measures that they may or may not have to take. And another small point on the graph where you showed the national herd, the increasing or the decreasing in line with the nitrate output and the water quality, can you specify, the national herd is a broad encompassing term, is it dairy herd, beef herd, is it all together? There are obviously differences in terms of increase in stock in those specific herds. So times it is more beneficial to specify exactly what we are talking about. It is not all sectors are increasing. Thanks a million.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Mitchell?

CLLR MITCHELL: To congratulate the staff on the work. It is rare to get good news on the pollution and the fact it is down to working with the people on the ground. I think it is a very good example of a local authority getting the water quality better. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Finally, councillor Vincent Blake.

CLLR BLAKE: Thank you, to the staff and well done. With regards to County Wicklow, and with some of the treatment plants and the consequences of the work, the work that has not been done in the last number of years [distortion of sound] Donal, you were doing a project on the Derry water some time ago, can I ask did the project ever go ahead or is it still in the bins regarding COVID? Is it still there or are you still working on it? [distortion of sound]

CATHAOIRLEACH: I will ask Breege to come in and Jonathan, I know you recently met the IFA group, a very positive meeting. So I may get Breege to come in on the general point.

>>: Thank you very much, Cathaoirleach, I will probably have to divert some inquiries to Jonathan in terms of water treatment plans and investment, that has been talked about on previous council meetings regards to Irish waters and a list of priorities. I know that the next two schemes being looked at is in terms of Tinahely and Dunlavin. All of the suggestions there are really good, in terms of talking to the teachers and working together with the pollution control. I will have to divert to Jonathan on the fluke nuke and the Newtown rivers, Jonathan, you may come in on that one. You may just drop in on that one there, would you now?

JONATHAN: Thank you. The Newcastle River, we have seen increase in the phosphates in the last two years.

We don't know what the source is yet. We just get the data for the one location. So, it is up to the scientists then to go into the catchment and to do investigative monitoring and to do a public awareness campaign to figure out where that pollution is coming from. So that water body is listed as a priority area for action in the next river basin management plan, the draft. We are happy to see that included in there.

For the Newtown and the Kennedy river, it is at the top of the catchment, it doesn't have to be a high status but it had been high status, we would like to see it return to that. So that is something that we will follow-up with the landowners upstream of the monitoring location and there are only about two landowners upstream of that, we will probably have to do a river walk of that to take a cognisance of the activities within the catchment, it is forestry, followed by steep agriculture. So depending on what we will find and who we have to talk to look for a solution.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Jonathan, in terms of the meeting, the farming organisations and groups, would you elaborate a little on that?

JONATHAN: Thank you to yourself we were invited to the IFA meeting in West Wicklow. It was a really nice evening, we got to share the findings with the group. What really surprised me with the meeting was the positive attitudes of the group and their technical knowledge. I was very, very impressed with the levels of questions and interest in some things that you are asking here today as well. It was a very positive meeting. Hopefully something that we can build on with the groups over the next river basin management plan between Donal and ourselves.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Jonathan. Finally, Donald, one question there for yourself from Councillor Blake?

>>: So, there is a fish barrier on the Ballenglen Bridge, at the bridge. We have been working as Jonathan mentioned, it is a fish barrier programme that is initiated between ourselves inland fisheries and the council and the [distortion of sound] River Trust. So we are basically starting with a slow progress but we have seen funding from it. And it is at the design stages so we would like to do public consultation and thank you very much to Linton for giving local people, who we needed to get in contact with regards to the access for the land and things like that. That is something that we have to do over the coming months when we get a preliminary design completed. With regards, as I was meeting the groups, as Councillor O'Connor mentioned, I'm available for meeting groups and councillors down by the river or over Zoom, whichever you prefer. to speak on any of the water projects that we are funding and have coming up on the community development fund in later November, so later in the month. And we are working with several groups within the county, so great to work with some more. With regards to councillor Walsh's point there is a Newcastle Tiny Towns which focus on the biodiversity along the river. So I have started to work with them. Over there, they are putting in application to that funding as I mentioned. And the comment by Edward Timmins, it is exactly the type of consultation that we want with regards, with where we should prioritise investment say for Irish Water and in waste water treatment plants. If we know of local issues, it

is exactly the type of consultation and sub missions that we want into the draft with regards to the basin management plan to get these things prioritised in County Wicklow.

>>: Can I get back to Lourda Scott on a question, to do with the national heard figures, the national heard are the total heard numbers that they count for. But there are changes in the national heard in recent times. The national heard is definitely changing towards dairy. So a huge increase in dairy numbers. That is worrying from a water quality perspective as dairy cattle don't just stay in one field. Dairy cattle come into the yard twice a day, for milking and we see impacts with the intense fiction of dairy, it will be something that we will have to work hard with the stakeholders to come up with solutions if that is the department or if it is all of us together, really, you take 250 cattle on intensive farmyard walking through a river twice a day for 20 minutes, and to the yard and to and from the yard, it impacts on the water. So we worry about the trend from beef to dairy. But it is, that is a national policy. And the water framer directive came in for criticism in that it is not all joined up thinking, if it is a plan, it should be, that we should be talking to other plans. So if there is an agricultural plan for the country it should be marrying with the water plans for the country. That will have to happen. Not an easy discussion to have, though. There may be one other question with regards to Tim Healy and the smaller towns, I know that Irish Water had been prioritising large treatment plants and large towns without adequate treatment. They are getting on top of that. What they do with the smaller treatment plants, they are actively improving the performance of those. It does not increase the capacity of the plants but tribal to trouble shoot the plants and it is a smaller amount of investment. It is hoped in the coming years that they will put money into the smaller plants, so keep your voice in for the smaller plants.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Counsellor Bourke?

CLLR BOURKE: It was looked at in dairy areas, they found that the nitrate was lower than in tillage areas in other parts of the country. They mentioned that the nitrate levels are measured from rainwater fallen up to 20 years ago so, there is a long lead in period to get the readings that we are getting. So I am confused by you saying, I am getting the impression from what you are saying Jonathan, it is immediate, the higher intensity of livestock is having an immediate effect on the water quality, where the message I was getting was it was over a long period, things happening 15 to 20 years ago that were recorded then and now, are measured in the reading as it that we have today.

JONATHAN: There are two aspects. Groundwater and surplus water. Nitrates heading for groundwater take a long time to get there. Tillage areas have higher inputs and have a much bigger nitrogen impact on the local land but it takes longer to trickle down through the ground to get into the ground body of water itself. But in County Wicklow, we have soils over bedrock that is permeable. So everything on a farm, nitrate can go thinly through the soils, to hit the bedrock so we see a quick level of nitrates in the agriculture settings, I hope that it answers your question.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you all. Thank you to Jonathan, Donal and to Breege. Now moving on. We have John Gleeson with us.

JOHN: Good afternoon, everybody. It is a presentation on the global and domestic demand in the screen content sector at the moment.

I have prepared a good few slides so, I may not have time to get through the entire presentation. I will skip through some of them more quickly than others and focus on the global demand and the domestic demand piece which is part of the County Wicklow strategy that my firm have been engaged to do.

It is a sector development strategy, 2022 to 2026. So, this is the agenda although we may not get through it all.

I'm going to quickly run through the SWOT analysis that we carried out for the report. And then to talk about the global and the domestic context of the film and the television industry at the moment. The driving consumer demand and then run through some of the recommendations within the report in relation to Screen Wicklow, Foreign Direct Investment Domestic Screen Content and Screen Tourism, if I get the chance.

So, a quick run through the swat analysis. Wicklow County Council, the strength within the sector, studio space, Ashford Studios, Ardmore Studios and The Greystones Media Campus which is coming online shortly.

The section 481 tax credit that I will come back to later on within the presentation. Close proximity to Dublin, to the lower costs than living in the city, good proximity to Dublin Airport, lifestyle, Wicklow County Council's accommodation and facilities, the Clermont building and Hub. And we are an English-language speaking territory within Europe. We have experienced cast and crew working within the sector in Ireland. A range of interesting scenery and exteriors combining with the studio space in Wicklow County Council make us unique. Our crews are world leaders in COVID-19 safety and again, I will revisit that point as a go through the presentation as well.

Other strengths, availability of equipment and a very good representation within the sector. The weaknesses, not so much of a presence of animation within the county to date, compared to other areas of the country, like Galway, Kilkenny and Dublin. Readiness of the industry for incoming demand which is something that is a global weakness, not just specific to Ireland or indeed, County Wicklow. county incentives, the tax credit cap, that I will talk about again later. And studio space, shortage, again, it is a global issue, it is an Irish issue, it is an issue in County Wicklow. Limited post production capabilities within the county at the moment. Insufficient working opportunities. And public transport availability to the content creation enterprise hub. Opportunities, the global demand, that I will speak about, the Greystones studio, the hackman and [distortion of sound] and Brexit and lack of UK studio space, talent development, film tourism, the natural beauty of County Wicklow and the audio visual media services directive coming on stream shortly. Finally, the threats, new studio space developed outside of Ireland. Remote versus working at the enterprise hub. And the lack of both visual effects need for the hub itself.

So, the global context is that this industry is expanding exponentially in recent years and it is forecast to further expand exponentially for the foreseeable future. In 2019, global extend tower exceeded that amount which was \$177 billion. So, despite the

shutdown of production substantially from March until August, September, of 2020, Ireland still had activity spend, local spend of 213 million Euros. In context 2019, the total amount of local employment and spend on local goods and services with 357 million. OK, that was in 2019, 357 million. That was up 162% on 2018 and 256% since 2007. This year, so far, actually, I think that this figure, the first six months of this year, it is already a spend in the country of 289 million and it is anticipated that 2021 will exceed 2019. That is despite lockdowns, up until recently, that the spend in Ireland in 2021, will be the same, if not more than 2019, which, sorry, to repeat myself, it was a 162% increase on 2018. So those numbers give you a context in terms of the demand and the push factor that is happening in terms of inward investment.

Consumer demand.

Next slide, please.

The, I think that some of the formatting on the slide is a little off but this is a very useful chart that shows the amount of time that people spend of share available minutes watching screens. OK? You can see an increase there from 2015 into 2020, pre-pandemic and post pandemic just on the chart on the left-hand side.

And on the right, you can see the increases that are happening across those, it is a pity that the slide has not come across in the formatting, it is essentially saying that people are spending more time watching, streaming video on demand and balking video on demand as the years go by. So, moving on to the next slide, please.

This is again, the analysis that we carried out in terms of people's viewing habits. Again you can see that there is a drop in live broadcast consumption, and a big move into streaming video on demand which in, on the pie chart on the right-hand side, it is that lower red arch compared to on the left-hand side from 6% to 31%.

So, moving on to the next slide, please.

So this is the disappointing but not unsurprising trends in relation to cinema box office, in particular, over the last few years and taking into account the pandemic in 2020 and 2021.

So we are seeing a significant fall off in attendance at cinemas but again, that is, it has resulted in a corresponding increase in viewers on video streaming, on streaming video on demand.

Next slide, please.

So this is another interesting set of statistics here. What we are looking at here, are the numbers of people who are sub scribing for video on demand services as we move from 2020 into 2021 and forecasting out to 2026.

The larger, lighter yellow blocks represent the number of viewers where as the smaller orange blocks represent the number of subscriptions. The reason why they are different is because one subscription can be used by a multiple of viewers.

The growth is interesting. But what is actually the most interesting thing about this slide is the fact that the number of global subscriptions to streaming video on demand subscriptions is forecasting to get to 600 million by 2026, still a very small proportion of the global population. So, the key take away from this is that we are at the start of an explosion in content demand and as the years go by, these, the switch to streaming video on demand will be more acute and there is lots and lots of scope for growth globally for subscriptions.

Next slide, please.

So, some of the key recommendations that are coming from the report, are for rebranding of Screen Wicklow, the development of a dedicated site for Screen Wicklow and online database for locations, crews and facilities and the appointment of a screen officer for County Wicklow and considering locating Screen Wicklow in the new hub. Next slide, please.

It's an understatement to say that there is a huge demand for content globally. I think that County Wicklow is very well placed to absorb a lot of that demand.

There is, it's a huge growth area. It's a sector that provides a lot of knock-on spend and a very attractive multiplier in terms of investment.

Next slide, please.

So this is what I really wanted to get into here for the purposes of the presentation today.

This is the analysis of the existing studio space for the United Kingdom. In the UK they currently have 3 million square feet of studio space all booked. Some of it booked and rented under 10-year leases at 90 to 100% capacity. There is over 2 million square feet, either under construction or going through planning at the moment.

Our clients are essentially all of the large film studios in the US and the large streamers. We are in contact with them on a daily basis as part of our business. I spoke to the head of production finance in Netflix in the UK this morning to say that they are now actively turning away work from the UK this year and next year because there is just no more studio space left in the UK and they are struggling to get crews. That is after taking in crews from other parts of Europe as well. So the next slide is a corresponding piece of work that we carried out just to show how Ireland, while at a smaller scale, it is following that trend.

So, at the moment, we have 238,000 square feet of studio space that is official studio space with a sign over the door saying: This is a film studio. This excludes a warehouse conversion or anything, of which there is plenty of that going on as well.

We have projects that are, have either been granted planning or are under construction, and there are a number of other projects as well that are doing press releases but the projects on this slide are what we feel are the realistic ones that should end up being constructed over the next few years increasing Ireland's studio space from a quarter of a million square feet to just over 1 million square feet hopefully within the next 3-5 years.

So compared to the UK three million feet now, they are building another two and taking long leases and hopefully Ireland and indeed Wicklow will follow suit here, so that is just a very brief overview of where we are in terms of studio space. So, next slide, please. So foreign direct investment, the key point from our research, obviously the Section 481 tax credit is very advantageous. What we need to consider from a policy perspective is that Section 481 is not unique. Most countries have a tax credit for film and television production these days. So rather than it being unique as it might have been 20 years ago or indeed even up to ten years ago was unique because 481 applied to high-end television where as it didn't in other jurisdiction, this is a competitive landscape and we need to work on Ireland and Wicklow being competitive in terms of the tax credit. We currently have a 07 million tax cap which was increased from 50 million to 70 million in 2015, which was fine at the time because a lot of the work that is carried on in Wicklow and in Ireland is for high-end television. Back in 2015, you could make ten episodes of high-end technology for €70 million without much trouble. Bearing in mind that the balance of the spend on producing a show would probably happen in another jurisdiction to do post and visual effects. Now, literally five or six years later presidents not unusual for a season of television to cost 200 million per season. So that is something that strategically needs to be addressed. Consideration for large-scale film productions in Ireland is always going to be subject to the availability of studio space and I think there is quite a bit of encouraging activity in that space as I said on the previous slide. So next slide, please.

So key considerations:

So Wicklow has very good reputation in terms of skills and available facilities, good housing, transport, quality of living, very interesting and attractive exterior scenery suitable for many projects. As I said earlier Ireland is seen as market-leaders in terms of health and safety and Covid-19 protocols on set which has really led to a surge in activity of inward investment projects in the last year in particular. What happened in Ireland was that up until last year we had lots and lots of smaller feature films which are great, it's the smaller indigenous sector being very busy, but that sometimes squeezes out the availability of crew and other facilities for studio-type movies. Larger blockbuster, high-end television type work. But, during the Covid pandemic, the UK Government introduced a backstop insurance policy for any projects that were shut down as a result of Covid. The Irish Government didn't reciprocate, so a lot of the smaller indigenous film and television producers struggled to close financing on their projects, which freed up a lot of local facilities, studios and crews for the larger projects to come into Ireland. That, combined with a very strict set of rules and protocols around Covid-19, meant that the first few projects that came to Ireland around August/September of 2020 went off pretty successfully and since then we have just seen a huge surge in inward investment projects. So next slide, please.

So key considerations when marketing county Wicklow to foreign producers. Ireland and Wicklow have a skilled and experienced workforce. When you are shooting in Wicklow you don't have to, in a lot of circumstances have to consider high mileage premium ones on accommodation that you might require for shoots in other parts of

the country, due to its close proximity with Dublin and that were English-speaking. So next slide, please.

It's important to say that there is a symbiotic relationship between the domestic, indigenous film and TV production sector and the inward investment type projects. So a lot of the crews get to hone their skills when they work on larger projects and that creates a skill-base for Ireland that and, experience for everything from actors to writer, producers and directors, but also the skills, the behind the camera work that goes on on movies, people with experience of working on the larger projects it creates huge opportunities and skills for the domestic, sector to tell Irish stories.

Okay, so, next slide, please. And just the number of recommendations here that will be contained in the report, just in terms of the interaction of Screen Wicklow and the Content Creation Enterprise Hub and how Screen Wicklow will be able to market the county and bring in more inward investment and to develop an indigenous sector in the county. So, next slide.

I have just a few slides here that are just listing off more kind of recommendations which I am just very conscious of time, but the interaction of Screen Wicklow and Content Creation and actually film tourism as well, so just the next slide would be great, please.

So, a number of recommendations in the report, just to say that there are no formal links between Wicklow County Tourism and the Wicklow Film Office. So Wicklow Tourism mightn't be aware of filming in the county until the late stage or maybe even until the film or TV programme has been released. We are recommending a more formal mechanism should be established to ensure that Wicklow County Tourism is aware of forthcoming film in the area and opportunities for the two sectors to work together is maximised. Next slide, please.

So, the slides just have essentially more of the recommendations we have in the report, so if anyone wants to study them after the presentation, or have any questions, they can ask them. I think that is the end of the slide show and I just wanted to leave, make sure we had enough time to answer any questions if there are any?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, John. I am sorry we are out of time, but thank you for your very comprehensive report. I think you outlined very clearly that Wicklow has a very good reputation in the film sector, particularly with its proximity to Dublin and the skilled workforce that you mentioned and we have a lot of interested parties in Wicklow in terms of the film industry. So, look, I think we are on an upward curve and long may it continue. Thank you for your time, I am sorry we can't have any questions we are completely out of time, but thank you for what you have put forward. Finally, members just one minute for Helen for correspondence. Sorry.

LORRAINE: There was a second part of that presentation, we have the head of the, there was a second part of that presentation, that was going to concentrate on the whole development of the Content Enterprise Hub, I appreciate we are out of time, maybe we will carry that forward to the December meeting. I apologise to my colleagues there waiting to come on.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, thank you.

ADMINISTRATOR: So just three brief items of correspondence. The budget meeting is scheduled for the 29th of November. Time to be confirmed but probably 11.00am.

Secondly, there is a public JPC scheduled for the 18th of November at 7.30pm. That will be held in Newtownmountkennedy. Details circulated tomorrow. Then thirdly IPB

personal accident insurance scheme, details were circulated with the agenda and the elected members were asked to come back to Teresa Byrne to advise which if any of the policies you wish to avail of by the 12th of November.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you again for your attention. We will have the protocol directly offer this meeting. Thank you.

THE MEETING THEN CONCLUDED