

ORDINARY MEETING OF WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

HELD AT COUNTY BUILDINGS, WHITEGATES, WICKLOW TOWN

ON

ON MONDAY, 13 MAY 2024 AT 2:00 PM

STENOGRAPHER: Niamh Kelly-Leahy, RMR, MBIVR

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1 PROCEEDINGS COMMENCED ON MONDAY, 13TH MAY 2024 AT 2:00PM:

2

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, members, we might start, if that's okay. Okay, Helen,
4 over to yourself.

5 MS PURCELL: Thanks. I would like to welcome everybody who is present. We
6 have members of the public in the public gallery; thank you for attending. And to
7 those attending remotely, if there are any issues with the technology remotely,
8 contact us, please.

9

10 I will start with the roll call.

11 MS PURCELL: Councillor Tommy Annesley.

12 COUNCILLOR ANNESLEY: Present.

13 MS PURCELL: Councillor Mark Barry.

14 COUNCILLOR BARRY: Present.

15 MS PURCELL: Councillor Joe Behan.

16 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Present.

17 MS PURCELL: Councillor Vincent Blake.

18 COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Present.

19 MS PURCELL: Councillor Sylvester Bourke -- is going to join us remotely at some
20 stage. Councillor Melanie Corrigan.

21 COUNCILLOR CORRIGAN: Present.

22 MS PURCELL: Councillor Avril Cronin.

23 COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Present.

24 MS PURCELL: Councillor Shay Cullen.

25 COUNCILLOR CULLEN: Present.

26 MS PURCELL: Councillor Erika Doyle. Councillor Gail Dunne.

27 COUNCILLOR DUNNE: Present.

28 MS PURCELL: Councillor Anne Ferris.

29 COUNCILLOR FERRIS: Present.

30 MS PURCELL: Councillor Pat Fitzgerald.

31 COUNCILLOR FITZGERALD: Present.

32 MS PURCELL: Councillor Aoife Flynn-Kennedy.

33 CHAIRPERSON: Present.

34 MS PURCELL: Councillor Tom Fortune.

1 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Present.
2 MS PURCELL: Councillor Patsy Glennon.
3 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Present.
4 MS PURCELL: Councillor Mary Kavanagh.
5 COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: Here.
6 MS PURCELL: Councillor Pat Kennedy.
7 COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: Present.
8 MS PURCELL: Councillor Peir Leonard.
9 COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Present.
10 MS PURCELL: Councillor Derek Mitchell.
11 COUNCILLOR MITCHELL: Present.
12 MS PURCELL: Councillor John Mullen.
13 COUNCILLOR MULLEN: Present.
14 MS PURCELL: Councillor Miriam Murphy.
15 COUNCILLOR MURPHY: Present.
16 MS PURCELL: Councillor Dermot O'Brien.
17 COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Anseo.
18 MS PURCELL: Councillor Paul O'Brien.
19 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Present.
20 MS PURCELL: Councillor Rory O'Connor. Councillor Gerry O'Neill.
21 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Anseo.
22 MS PURCELL: Councillor Mick Ryan.
23 COUNCILLOR RYAN: Anseo.
24 MS PURCELL: Councillor Lourda Scott. Councillor John Snell.
25 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Present.
26 MS PURCELL: Councillor Stephen Stokes.
27 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Present.
28 MS PURCELL: Councillor Edward Timmins.
29 COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: Present.
30 MS PURCELL: Councillor Gerry Walsh.
31 COUNCILLOR WALSH: Present.
32 MS PURCELL: And Councillor Irene Winters.
33 COUNCILLOR WINTERS: Here.
34 MS PURCELL: Thank you very much.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Any votes of sympathy. Councillor Edward Timmins.

2 COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: Thanks, Chairman. I would like to propose a vote of
3 sympathy to the family of Molly Dempsey, from Baltinglass, a 15-year-old girl who
4 died tragically in a car accident a little over a week ago. I would like to propose
5 sympathy to the Dempsey and Fox families, well-known families in the area.

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Paul O'Brien.

7 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I have two if you
8 don't mind. I would like to offer my condolences to the family of Jackie, John
9 Sillery, a very quiet unassuming man and a very good neighbour of mine for over 25
10 years and I offer my condolences to his wife Kathleen, his son daughter and
11 daughters Avril and Alison. I would like to offer my condolences to the family of
12 Josip Strok a Croatian man, tragically murdered in Dublin for speaking his own
13 native tongue. My sincere condolences to his family and I hope they get justice.
14 Thank you.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Vincent Blake.

16 COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Just two. I'll just mention as well Molly Dempsey in
17 Baltinglass, a very, very sad tragic circumstances. And also the family of Cathal
18 Friel who was an outdoor employee of the Council here for quite a number of years
19 in the Tinahely area. So to Cathal's family, a Donegal man. He made Wicklow his
20 home many, many years ago. He has travelled a lot of the world as well, but he
21 made Coolkenna his home and worked with the county council in the Tinahely area
22 for a number of years. Thanks.

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Stephen Stokes.

24 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Go raibh maith agat, Cathaoirleach. I would like to offer
25 my condolences to family of Pamela McCormack who is originally from Bray and
26 living in Rivendell in Greystones. Especially her son Calum. She will be very sadly
27 missed.

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor, Councillor Shay Cullen.

29 COUNCILLOR CULLEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I'll just remember two people.
30 Firstly, I would like to remember the late Pat Malone who passed away recently. Pat
31 was a dedicated member of the Roundwood community, in particular the farming
32 community. A man that enjoyed the simple pleasures in life, was very involved in
33 the community. I would like to give condolences to his wife Margaret, sons Paul and
34 Joe, daughter Geraldine and wider family and friends.

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And also, I suppose, a real shock and sadness came over our county Saturday the 20th of April with the sudden and untimely death of Danny Dowling. I got to know Danny in 2010 when I took over the Ballinacor GAA team and from then on we struck up a wonderful friendship. Danny was an all round gentleman. A sporting figure. Somebody that hundred doubted talent on and off the field. He was a tough competitor, at times maybe he crossed the line, but I often seen him picking up his opponent off the ground with a smile and just got on with things. I suppose the greatest tribute I could give to Danny Dowling, he was a leader and he had characteristics that others could only aspire to have. Danny was the heartbeat of Glenmalure Valley and I know my fellow councillor, Councillor Kennedy I am sure will testify to this: He will be missed by so many, to his wife Brittany, his children Cohen and Reggie, his mother Anne, brothers Michael and Steven, his sister Maureen, his team mates of Ballinacor and the wider community of Glenmalure. Danny may be gone but will never be forgotten. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor John Mullen.

COUNCILLOR MULLEN: Cathaoirleach, I want to be associated with Councillor Blake's expression of sympathy for Cathal Friel who was an outdoor worker on behalf of the Fianna Fáil and also on behalf of the GAA. He was heavily involved in the GAA and had won national awards and recognition. So to his family.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Councillor Gail Dunne.

COUNCILLOR DUNNE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I would just like to pray for Pa Curley who died suddenly in Roundwood. I knew Pa, he worked in Ashford school, where my kids went to school. He was a great, great guy and everybody liked Pa. I was very sad to hear it, thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Gerry O'Neill.

COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: If I could offer my condolences to the family of Des Cullen of Kilbride. Des was a character. He played football with Kilbride in the sixties and he was a lovely neighbour and a great auld character. Thanks, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Helen, do you have any?

MS PURCELL: We extend our sympathies to the family of Graham Larkin, husband of our colleague Laura Larkin, and also Paddy Manley, father of our colleague Paddy Manley.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Okay. Everybody, we'll raise for a
2 minute's silence.

3 (Minute's silence).

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you members. Before we commence, members, this is
5 obviously our last meeting but we are going to hold any discussions around that until
6 the end of the meeting, if that's okay, just so that we can get the order of business
7 done. This is also quite a historic occasion because we have 125 years of local
8 government, so I have asked Catherine to say a few words. Thank you.

9 CATHERINE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Yes, we are celebrating 125 years of
10 Wicklow County Council this year. The first meeting took place in the courthouse in
11 Wicklow on the 22nd of April 1899 at half 11, a little bit earlier than we meet now,
12 and on a Saturday, no less. The Local Government Act marked a watershed in the
13 history of our county where local government was transferred from the
14 landlord-dominated grand jury system to the democratically elected county council
15 system we have today. So the franchise was extended and for the first time some
16 women could vote. This resulted in the majority of seats, certainly in southern
17 Ireland, going to the Nationalist vote. I have the first minute book here with me
18 today of that meeting in the courthouse 125 years ago and you can see the first
19 county councillors who were elected and the first resolutions passed by that council,
20 and these include support for Home Rule and for a Catholic university. So the book
21 is also part of our digitised collections on wicklow.ie, so you can see lots of the
22 archive of Wicklow County Council and the bodies that came before on the archive
23 section of wicklow.ie. You might have noticed that there is an exhibition in the
24 foyer at the moment marking the occasion. I will here for around 30 minutes if
25 anybody would like to have a look at the original book. I will be down there in the
26 corner. And just to wish you all very happy anniversary. Thank you.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Catherine. And I was thinking about it
28 last night, I was thinking this is the first year that we have ever had a female Chief
29 Executive and a female Cathaoirleach at the one time and given that 125 years ago
30 women couldn't vote, I think that in itself is an achievement. So if anybody wants to
31 go down and have a look at the book, they are more than welcome.

32

33 Item number 1 is to confirm and sign the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of
34 Wicklow County Council held on Monday, the 8th of April 2024. Proposed by

1 Councillor Shay Cullen, seconded by Councillor Rory O'Connor. Is that agreed by
2 all? (Agreed.) Thank you.

3

4 Item number 2 is to consider the disposal of 18 square metres or thereabouts in the
5 townland of Newrath, Rathnew, County Wicklow to Teagasc, Oak Park, Carlow,
6 R93 XE12 by way of a one-year lease commencing on 26th June 2024 as per the
7 notice previously circulated.

8 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Proposed.

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Proposed by Councillor John Snell. Seconded by Councillor
10 Paul O'Brien. Is that agreed? (Agreed.) Thank you.

11

12 Item number 3 is to consider the disposal of 115 square meters or thereabouts in the
13 townland of Newrath, Rathnew, County Wicklow to Art McCormack and Thomas
14 O'Leary of MosArt Limited by way of a one-year lease commencing on the 23th
15 May 2024, as per the notice previously circulated.

16 Proposed by Councillor Shay Cullen. Do I have a seconder? Seconded Gail Dunne.
17 Is that agreed? (Agreed.) Thank you.

18

19 Item number 4, to consider the disposal of 176 square meters or thereabouts in the
20 townland of Newrath, Rathnew, County Wicklow known as the Science Laboratory,
21 Clermont House, Rathnew, County Wicklow to Ms Caoimhe Doyle, 128
22 Kindlestown Park, Greystones, County Wicklow by way of a one-year lease
23 commencing the 9th June 2024, as per notice previously circulated.

24 Proposed by Councillor John Snell, seconded by Councillor Stephen Stokes. Is that
25 agreed? (Agreed.)

26

27 Item number 5, to consider the disposal of 0.0254 hectares or thereabouts in the
28 townland of Abbeylands Road, County Wicklow comprised in folio number
29 WW2384L County Wicklow being the property known as 16 Griffith Street, Arklow,
30 County Wicklow by Transfer Order to Mr Brendan McDonald (as LPR of Mary
31 Maura McDonald) of 16 Griffith Street, Arklow, County Wicklow, the person
32 entitled to the freehold interest in the property, as per the notice previously
33 circulated.

34 Can I have a proposer? Proposed by Councillor Pat Fitzgerald. Seconded,

1 Councillor Tommy Annesley. Is that agreed? (Agreed.)

2

3 Members, I am going to excuse myself for item number 6 because I am involved
4 with Ark Housing Association. So Councillor Gail Dunne, the last cathaoirleach,
5 will take over for this item.

6 (Councillor Aoife Flynn-Kennedy leaves the meeting room.)

7

8 COUNCILLOR DUNNE: Item number 6, to consider disposal of 181.5 square
9 metres or thereabouts of property comprised of folio number WW10471F being the
10 property known as 5 Dargle Heights, Bray, County Wicklow, to approved housing
11 body Ark Housing Association, Bray, County Wicklow. Can I have a proposer?
12 Councillor Behan.

13 COUNCILLOR FERRIS: Seconded.

14 COUNCILLOR DUNNE: Seconded by Councillor Ferris. Agreed? (Agreed.)

15 (Councillor Aoife Flynn-Kennedy returns to the meeting room.)

16 MS PURCELL: I will take the opportunity to note that all members are present, so
17 those that weren't present at the start of the roll call: Councillor Sylvester Bourke,
18 Councillor Erika Doyle, Councillor Miriam Murphy, Councillor Rory O'Connor and
19 Councillor Lourda Scott are all present now. Thank you.

20 COUNCILLOR MURPHY: Thanks Helen.

21 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you members. So moving on to item number 7, to
22 note the Annual Financial Statement 2023 and to approve by resolution: 1, the
23 additional net expenditure in excess of budget in accordance with section 104(7) of
24 the Local Government Act 2001 and (ii) additional transfers to and from capital in
25 excess of the budget, a copy of which was attached. Brian.

26 MR GLEESON: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I'll just give a short overview of the AFS to
27 start off with and then we can take the formal resolutions in respect of the net
28 expenditure and capital transfers after that.

29

30 The financial accounts for Wicklow County Council for 2023 have been prepared in
31 accordance with the Local Authority Accounting in Ireland Code the Practice,
32 regulations and the directions of the Minister for Housing, Local Government and
33 Heritage. The Council faced a number of economic challenges and uncertainties
34 during 2023, including high inflation and energy costs and increased interest rates.

1 However, I am pleased to report that despite these challenges the Council's overall
2 financial position remained quite strong at the end of 2023.

3

4 The total expenditure incurred in the revenue account after transfers was 150 million;
5 an increase of 16 million on 2022. A revenue surplus of 341,000 was generated
6 which reduced our overall revenue deficit to 598,000 at year end. It is important that
7 we continue to reduce our revenue deficit year on year and we expect that in two
8 years' time it be eliminated entirely, which is very positive news.

9

10 Capital account expenditure including transfers was 131 million last year. The vast
11 majority of this expenditure was under our housing programme and a full breakdown
12 by programme group is outlined in Appendix 6 on page 42 of the report.

13

14 I am also pleased to note that the commercial rates collection increased from 88% to
15 91% last year, which is the highest collection rate Wicklow has ever achieved. Our
16 housing loans collection rate also increased significantly from 84% up to 90%. The
17 housing rent collection dropped from 85 to 84%. However, to address this matter a
18 new debt management unit is being established this year under the finance
19 directorate and rent collection will move from housing to this new dedicated debt
20 collection unit which should improve matters in this area.

21

22 A significant amount of expenditure occurred, a lot was achieved in 2023 and some
23 of the key actions and deliverables are outlined on pages 7 and 8 of the financial
24 review.

25

26 While the AFS itself is just for noting by the members, under section 104(7) of the
27 Local Government Act, approval of the members is sought for the net expenditure in
28 excess of budget in the revenue account and for transfers to and from the capital
29 account.

30

31 In relation to net expenditure in excess of budget, these amounts are outlined by
32 division on page 4 of the AFS as well as in note 16 on page 26, and they are as
33 follows: Housing and building, 1,602,782; roads transportation safety, 190,871;
34 development management, 222,024; environmental services 1,478,204; recreation

1 and amenity, 598,559; and finally, agricultural, education, health and welfare,
2 120,997.

3

4 These excesses were offset by other spends in other areas and explanations for the
5 net expenditure are outlined in the financial review on pages 2, 3 and 4 of the main
6 report. Approval by the members for transfers to and from capital is also requested.
7 The amounts by division are outlined on page 5 of the financial review and also
8 notes 14 and 16 on pages 25 and 26. The total transfers to capital are 6,534,649 and
9 from capital, 3,591,403. Transfers to capital are in respect of past expenditure which
10 has resulted in deficits in the capital account as well as the provision of specific
11 reserves for future expenditure and commitments. Some of the most significant
12 transfers in 2023 include the ongoing provision to cover future appeals to the
13 valuation tribunal in relation to rates valuations, that was 616,000; provision for
14 match funding requirements for capital projects, 800,000; ICT infrastructure
15 provision, 280,000; housing remediation works, 450,000; machinery yard transfers,
16 447,000; public lighting energy efficiency projects, 200,000; and harbour works,
17 375,000.

18

19 The most significant transfers from capital are rates revaluation provision, a funds
20 rate income reductions following tribunal decisions and that was 2.2 million. Also,
21 another amount is internal capital receipts to fund pre-letting expenditure of
22 approximately 278,000 under the housing division.

23

24 So if the members have any questions on the AFS, I can take them now. After that I
25 will need a proposer and seconder for both the net expenditure in excess of budget
26 and for the transfers to and from capital. Thank you

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Brian. So I will open it up to the floor for
28 questions. Councillor Joe Behan.

29 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach, and thanks to Brian for the report.
30 I just have two questions. On page 28 under the heading of "Contingent Liability"
31 there's reference made to Whitestown and yet again no information about what the
32 financial liability of the cleaning up of Whitestown is going to be for this Council
33 and the people of this county.

34

1 Now, I understand from another source, but not from the top table, that there has
2 been a recent court hearing in relation to Whitestown and I would appreciate if the
3 chief executive could update us as to what happened at that particular court hearing
4 in recent weeks.

5

6 Secondly, in relation to the last page, Appendix 8, the interests of local authority in
7 companies and joint ventures, and there's a number of them listed there, and we're
8 associated with all of them. Can I ask, have we still got an interest in East Coast
9 FM? We certainly were involved in the early days of establishing East Coast FM
10 and a previous county manager was instrumental in that and did great work at the
11 time. He subsequently went on to chair the board of East Coast FM and when I
12 checked the website recently his name still appears. Maybe that is out of date now.
13 Are we entitled to have a director on the board of East Coast FM? Are we entitled to
14 nominate the chairperson? And what is the valuation of shares, if we have shares in
15 that company? And if we do, would they not have been mentioned here? Thank
16 you.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Do we have any other
18 questions from members? No. Okay. Brian, can I hand that back to you and Emer,
19 yes, if you want to.

20 MS O'GORMAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. In relation to Whitestown, I suppose
21 the matter is still before the courts and has been the subject of a number of hearings
22 in the court. We're due back in court again on the 10th of June. There was a recent
23 case heard, I think on the 18th of April in relation to motions, in relation to orders
24 not having been completed within the timeline as set out by the court, but other
25 matters have superseded, as in the remediation plan has changed since the original
26 records were made. So it is still ongoing. There are live, I suppose, orders from the
27 court. A number of judgments have been made in relation to the remediation at the
28 site and the instruction is that it has to be remediated off-site, and we have discussed
29 this before, Councillor, about where that might be or not be, as the case might be.
30 We are in discussions with our colleagues in the Department of Environment,
31 Climate and Community because ultimately the cost of the remediation is going to be
32 significant and it will be a matter for the State and not just Wicklow County Council.
33 So the burden doesn't fall completely on the local authority. We do not know the
34 extent of those costs as yet. So I suppose from a financial management point of

1 view, and Brian can comment on that, it is prudent to have a contingent liability
2 reserve there to deal with all manner of legal costs that are there. So we are still in
3 the courts. Still in the High Court on a very regular basis on this matter. The court is
4 overseeing with a lot of diligence the steps that are required for the Council to
5 remediate the site and do that fully and in compliance with the orders that are there.
6 That is the current position as we have it. Brian might like to comment on the
7 contingent liability.

8

9 I know the matter of East Coast FM came up previously, a number of meetings ago,
10 and we have been doing some research into the shareholding and, again, Brian might
11 comment on that, but my understanding is that we don't have a -- we're not the
12 controlling shareholder in the company, but Brian might elaborate further on that.

13 Thank you.

14 MR GLEESON: Thanks, Chief Executive. And just in relation to the contingent
15 liability, that is standard accounting practice. That would be following discussions
16 with our local government auditor. So, obviously, until we such time we get an
17 exact figure we can't include it in the accounts but obviously it is going to be a
18 substantial amount. And for that amount we would include a contingent liability to
19 flag, I suppose, to the members here today and obviously the general public,
20 following publication of the report, that this is a significant issue that will obviously
21 impact on the accounts further down the field.

22

23 In relation to East Coast Radio, as the Chief Executive said, that did come up before.
24 The listing of the companies, the threshold to include it in our appendix would be
25 having voting powers of at least 20%, so I don't think that's the case in relation to
26 East Coast Radio. So that's the criteria for inclusion in the AFS appendix.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, I want to let Lorraine in there first.

28 MS GALLAGHER: Cathaoirleach, I just had more information. So Wicklow
29 County Council has a 0.76% share, Bray Town Council at the time would have been
30 0.3%, so that would automatically be Wicklow County Council. And Blaise Treacy
31 is listed as separately and Wicklow County Council are invited to an AGM, we get
32 notice annually, the Chairman of the Council. Okay.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Lorraine. Now, Councillor Behan.

34 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Just a quick follow up. Do we know what is that worth?

1 COUNCILLOR RYAN: We can find out. We are engaging with East Coast Radio
2 just by way of clarification. Because it is something that, you know, has been in
3 place for a long time and just goes off the radar as such.

4 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Okay.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: That's great. Thanks, Lorraine. Okay, members, so we need
6 a proposer and a seconder for the first part of item number 7, which is the additional
7 net expenditure in excess of the budget. So I am looking...

8 COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: I propose.

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Edward Timmins proposed -- or Councillor
10 Vincent Blake proposed, Councillor Gerry Walsh seconded. Is that agreed?
11 (Agreed.) Thank you. Then for the second part, the additional transfers to and from
12 the capital in excess of the budget. Proposed by Councillor Anne Ferris. Seconded?
13 Councillor Edward Timmins. Is that agreed? (Agreed.) Thank you, members.

14

15 Item number 8, to adopt the Wicklow County Council annual report 2023 in
16 accordance with section 221 of the Local Government Act 2001, a copy of which
17 was attached. Helen.

18 MS PURCELL: The Draft Annual Report was presented to the members at the April
19 meeting. The document in front of you is as was presented with a number of
20 additions. Now that the financial statement -- or there's a financial statement for
21 2023 is now included, now that the AFS has been adopted, along with a statement of
22 internal financial control, and the performance indicated submitted to NOAC for
23 2023 are also included. Anybody who has read it will notice there is an issue with
24 the numbering of pages and that will be fixed when we send it to be published. So a
25 proposer and a seconder, please.

26 CATHAOIRLEACH: I will open it to the floor in case anyone has any questions
27 and we are also looking for a proposer and a seconder for that item. Anyone in a
28 position to propose? Edward Timmins.

29 COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: I am happy to propose it.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks very much. And Paul O'Brien to second. Is that
31 agreed by all? (Agreed.) Okay. That's great.

32

33 Item number 9, to consider the Chief Executive's Monthly Management Report.
34 Chief executive, I'll hand over to yourself

1 MS O'GORMAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. The report, as always, is a
2 comprehensive update on the activities of the Council in the last month. We are
3 happy to take questions, as always, from the members but I suppose maybe before
4 we do that, I would just like to acknowledge and to pay tribute to a member of the
5 senior management team who is retiring. Ms Breege Kilkenny, as you know, is
6 retiring from Wicklow County Council in early June and this Friday is actually her
7 last day in service in Wicklow. I just personally want to thank Breege for her help
8 and support that she has given me in my role. As you know, this job isn't an easy
9 one, none of your jobs are easy either, but I can't do it without having a really good
10 strong management team and Breege has been an excellent addition to that
11 management team in the time that I have worked with her, which hasn't been very
12 long. But I know from her former chief executives, they would say the very same
13 thing about her. I just want to publicly acknowledge and put on the record my
14 thanks and your colleagues' thanks for your dedicated service to Wicklow County
15 Council and in particular to the Baltinglass MD over the last number of years. I
16 think they will have big shoes to fill. I want to wish you and your family the very,
17 very best and for a long and healthy retirement, Breege. Thank you.

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Breege, do you want to say anything?

19 MS KILKENNY: Yes. Just thank you and thank you for all the people who have
20 been coming up to me as well to wish me well. And thank you very much, Emer. It
21 has been my absolute privilege to have worked closely with so many of you
22 members over the years. As I have mentioned before, I believe you have a tough
23 job, as the Chief Executive has just said. My observation is that your role has
24 become much more demanding and recently more intrusive on your personal lives.
25 So I admire and respect the work that you do and how hard you work for all your
26 constituents, probably much more than they would appreciate. It is my belief that
27 the role and the value of the elected member is not only important but essential in
28 terms of the functioning and workings of the Council. You, the elected members,
29 have the pulse of the community and a number of times you have saved my bacon
30 and gave me the required steer when I needed it. So thank you. And thank you also
31 for the courtesy and the respect that you have shown me over the years.

32

33 You know, I was thinking about this over the weekend and I think, I haven't had a
34 crossword with any of you. We always seem to be able to work things out, despite

1 what the issues might have presented themselves at the time. So I guess that's a true
2 definition of mutual respect. I wish all of you who are running again the very best of
3 luck in the upcoming local elections and to those of you who are retiring, like
4 myself, and it is today, isn't it, as well, thank you for all your great -- our great years
5 together.

6
7 So it's not surprising that I am going to miss you all and I will miss my work in the
8 Council. I have loved it, being here. I have always tried to give my best, but equally
9 I received so much and learned so much in my time here. It's probably in housing
10 that I learned the most and got so much back in return. Housing is where any officer
11 will earn your stripes and also, you know, where you will learn gratitude. And now I
12 cannot let this occasion pass without mentioning West Wicklow and my beloved
13 Baltinglass MD and all six of what I consider are my Councillors, Patsy, Edward,
14 Vinnie, Avril, John and Gerry. What an absolute joy it has been to be your district
15 manager. And it is no secret that it has been the aspect of my role as director that I
16 have enjoyed the most. Having been supported by excellent district staff, including
17 Liam and Garvin before him, along with Pat Byrne, Dermot Grimm and Aideen
18 Russel. And rest assured I will continue to spend my St. Patrick's Day parade in
19 Blessington.

20
21 Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the Chief Executive, Emer and my colleagues
22 on the management team. It has been great working with you all and I think the
23 current team is one of the best. We work really well together. And finally, finally, I
24 see my retirement as just one more step on my journey in life and something to
25 celebrate. And on that note I would love to see as many of you as possible in the
26 golf club on Friday night.

27 Thank you very much.

28 (Applause.)

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Well said, Breege. Well said. Okay. Now I am opening up
30 the floor for my queries in relation to the Chief Executive's report. Councillor John
31 Mullen.

32 COUNCILLOR MULLEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Again, I know we paid tribute
33 to Breege at our last MD meeting, but I have to say it again, that she was a fantastic
34 colleague. For first-time councillors in particular, she guided us through the ropes of

1 the County Development Plan and guided us through the various functions of the
2 local authority as our district administrator. She was always a prompt responder to
3 any query that we gave by phone or by email or text. She was absolutely fantastic
4 and I wish her all the best in her retirement. I was with the Men's Shed on Saturday
5 and I showed them the bird box that you have that they had made and they were
6 delighted to see it occupied by the birds and they are looking forward to seeing you
7 at next year's show.

8

9 On the Chief Executive's report, back to business, I have two issues. One is the
10 attempts by the Chief Executive and others to get adaptation funding particularly for
11 the flooding caused by climate change. I know Wexford County Council had
12 received some funding in relation to roads and footpaths that have literally eroded
13 away with all the rain. We had leveraged monies here before for rural footpaths and
14 roads, because of the fact that the Active Travel seem to have forgot that rural
15 Ireland exists. I am hoping that that can be accessed and continued. Today is a rainy
16 day. We have had a couple of good days and hopefully we will have more good
17 days to some, but it is quite shocking the state of the roads because of literally the
18 amount of rainfall we have.

19

20 The second item is, there's a lot of anxiety out there at the moment amongst the
21 communities on the Arklow to Shillelagh Greenway. It has been quite some time
22 since we had the public consultations. I know they were concentrating on the
23 Blessington Greenway response to An Bord Pleanála, which they have completed
24 earlier in the year. It is now May, so the publication of the preferred route is really
25 essential, because people are starting to doubt again, that this project is stalled.
26 There's 90% buy-in in all the communities along the 38km route. It is a game
27 changer for the social regenerative tourism of the region. We really need the
28 preferred route published as quickly as possible. Thank you.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Paul O'Brien.

30 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, and thank you to the
31 Chief Executive, hopefully not for the last time I will be saying that, but thank you
32 for the comprehensive report.

33

34 Can I acknowledge Breege as well. I hope you enjoy your retirement after all your

1 long years of service. And you won't be just missed in the west; you'll be missed in
2 the east as well. I wish you well.

3

4 I just have two items in terms of the Chief Executive's report. Obviously a number
5 of us are on the doorsteps at the moment and we're getting a lot of queries. It is not
6 the big headline ones you think according to the media. A lot of people are tuned in
7 to local needs not just national needs. What is striking now in Wicklow Town is the
8 amount of houses that have gone up over the last number of years, but the recreation
9 and sporting grounds haven't followed through. A lot of people are spending a lot of
10 money on houses but the developers are simply only providing the bare minimum
11 when it comes to space. For example, I am dealing with a basketball club at the
12 moment, formed 37 years ago with over 400 members and still leasing a ground. So
13 can I just ask that maybe whoever is here in four or five weeks' time that certainly
14 Wicklow town be looked at for recreational sporting. I know that Brian and
15 Georgina in the town hall have been looking at a master plan. It is something that
16 needs to be pushed forward because there is a lack of amenities in the town,
17 including the harbour. I also want to welcome the pump track. I know the town
18 team have been working extremely hard on it and I just want to acknowledge that in
19 terms of what I am saying here today.

20

21 The second thing what I want to raise is what I hoped to raise last month, but I didn't
22 get a chance to. In terms of Ballinalea in Ashford, a positive news story in terms of
23 taking over 118 units and a lot of people coming off the social housing list. But
24 unfortunately, as was predicted by the six of us at the time, no infrastructure has been
25 improved in terms of road, so we now have a minimum of 200 cars going in and out
26 of an already busy estate in Ballinalea. I am sure I am not the only one getting calls
27 on this and emails. One ramp went back in, it was half finished and nothing else has
28 been done. Now I have been in contact with the MD but the MD are telling me that
29 the funds just aren't there from the MD's point of view. It is something I would ask
30 be looked at as a matter of urgency. And I know we hear it all the time, but it is an
31 accident waiting to happen and I don't want to be sitting here, pleased God in five
32 weeks' time or six weeks' time, saying I told you so and we should have done
33 something sooner. It's something that -- both items I am passionate about and I look
34 forward to your response. Thank you.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Councillor Stephen
2 Stokes. Go raibh maith agat, Cathaoirleach. Could I echo the sentiments in relation
3 to Breege and your tremendous service to County Wicklow. In the relatively short
4 time I have known you, you have been somebody who has been a real positive
5 can-do person. So thank you for your long-term service.

6
7 Just a couple of items I would love to raise, Cathaoirleach. I would warmly welcome
8 the extension of Arboretum and the additional employment and tourism it is
9 generating in the area. It is interesting because that particular road of Kilquade Hill,
10 it borders both the Greystones Municipal District and the Wicklow Municipal
11 District and I believe Arboretum is actually on the Wicklow Municipal District side.
12 But since the reopening of Arboretum, residents have raised locally with me a
13 significant issue in relation to parking. Although there is additional parking in
14 Arboretum itself, it doesn't seem to be satisfying the demand. In fact, I was up there
15 yesterday at 11 o'clock on a Sunday morning and the car park was nearly full and a
16 resident has sent me photos of, you know, essentially, a huge amount of cars along
17 that road that are parking on footpaths and pretty much everywhere. I wonder if
18 Wicklow County Council can take a look at that from a road management point of
19 view because it seems to be quite a significant issue and I know that Arboretum, in
20 fairness, have been liaising a little bit with residents but I think Wicklow County
21 Council will need to take a close look at that, so if that could be done.

22
23 Something that gets raised at every Greystones Municipal District meeting is the cliff
24 walk. We get regular updates, in fairness, from our district manager, Michael
25 Nicholson, in fairness, but I am interested and I think the whole Council will be
26 interested in just what's going on in relation to the cliff walk on the Bray side as well,
27 and I am sure other members from other districts will be interested in what's
28 happening with the Greystones district. If we can get an update on that, because the
29 cliff walk is absolutely essential. Now I do appreciate there is going to be a
30 temporary diversion on the Greystones' side, or that is the plan anyway to link in
31 with the Bray Head loop trail. I would be interested in where we are at with all of
32 that. And of course the Greystones Municipal District has grown significantly in
33 population in recent years and I certainly believe that there is a need for more
34 infrastructure and amenities, a bit similar to what Councillor O'Brien indicated for

1 the Wicklow Municipal District. And I think that the East Coast Greenway is a
2 really positive initiative. I wish the Council great success with that. We had a very
3 positive presentation last month, so that was great to see. But one of the big
4 challenges that I have raised in the past is the need for hotel for Greystones. Now I
5 believe that the Council was going to go out to tender or if they did, I don't know, for
6 a hotel for Greystones and I think there might have been apartments as part of that
7 plan. I am wondering if that has happened or where we're at with that. Certainly, for
8 the next five years, the next Council, I certainly passionately believe that there needs
9 to be a recycling centre for the Greystones Municipal District. It is the only district
10 without a recycling centre and I would like to ask that the Council would commit to
11 looking at this seriously for the next term.

12

13 Then finally, I am just interested in again providing more leisure resources in the
14 area. Charlesland Golf Club has been out of operation now for quite some time, in
15 fact it's fenced off. It is zoned for leisure. I am wondering if Wicklow County
16 Council might be willing to engage with looking at trying to create some nature trails
17 there. That is everything. Go raibh maith agat, Cathaoirleach.

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Councillor Derek
19 Mitchell.

20 COUNCILLOR MITCHELL: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. First of all, I would like to
21 thank Breege Kilkenny for her work for a long time and I wish her well in
22 retirement. I hope that goes well.

23

24 In terms of the Chief Executive's report, I would like to comment on the Chapel
25 Road pedestrian cycle infrastructure improvement. We have essentially the same
26 piece of information that's going out to tender in Q2 of this year on here that we have
27 had for the past probably five meetings. For the last 20 years I have urged that this
28 road be built, and little bits of it have been built at various stages over 20 years and
29 it's really tiny bits at various stages, and it's been essential. It was put on plan in
30 1989 and we built a thousand houses at least or allowed build over a thousand houses
31 on this road. I just wonder if the Council is capable of dealing with the rapid
32 expansion of a town with the progress that's been made on this since 1989 which is
33 35 years. And it is an absolutely essential road. As importantly, it will join five
34 schools with a cycle path and pedestrian path which is very much in tune with

1 current thinking and I have to say that I am concerned that central government is not
2 providing funding for it on that basis, possibly because it also helps cars as well, and
3 I think that is entirely wrong. I proposed a motion seven years ago, which five of the
4 six local councillors supported, that no houses would be built on this road until the
5 road was built. Unfortunately councillors from outside the area voted that down.
6 But it's blindingly obvious it shouldn't have been built until the road is built. It is
7 part of the deal of allowing the town to expand, is that you get proper roads in the
8 place. Now that has not been done. I know the CPO was done in 2021 but we need
9 to get on with it. There's just no way the Council has any sort of schedule that I
10 could believe on it. So that seems...

11

12 I just echo a point which Councillor O'Brien made about in a rapidly expanding
13 place, the need for parks, the needs for sports facilities where a large number of the
14 field sports clubs are full and also arts, and I think it's important that that is part of
15 the expansion of towns which are rapidly expanding. Thank you.

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Chief Executive, I will
17 pass over to yourself.

18 MS O'GORMAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, and thank you members. I will defer
19 to directors in a moment on a number of matters. Councillor Mullen, flooding
20 adaptation funding, we will seek funding for wherever we can, wherever we can,
21 particularly on our rural roads because anything that's at a gradient, certainly, is at
22 the detriment of the weather the whole time. Joe will give an update maybe on
23 Arklow to Shillelagh Greenway, and he'll also come in on a number of other items.

24

25 Councillor O'Brien, just in relation to the recreational sporting amenities, and
26 Councillor Stokes you raised it as well and Councillor Mitchell, yes, I would say by
27 and large as a county and the rate of growth in Wicklow has been such that we are
28 behind certainly in our green infrastructure and our public infrastructure for sporting
29 facilities. I am absolutely open at looking at master plans and so forth for the
30 different areas, similar probably to what's been done in Bray around Ballywaltrim,
31 you know, where we look at the demand in the round and see what is needed and
32 then come up with a solution that suits all sports users.

33

34 In relation to the road infrastructure at Ballinalea in Ashford, I might get Joe to

1 comment on that as well.

2

3 Councillor Stokes, the extension of the Arboretum and the parking issues in the
4 vicinity, we will certainly look at it and talk to our colleagues in An Garda Síochána
5 about parking enforcement as well, because that's a big issue if people are not able to
6 get into their own properties or access, and where it is not safe for people getting out
7 of parked cars on a busy road.

8

9 Leonora might come in on the hotel site in Greystones.

10 Councillor Mitchell, in relation to Chapel Road. Yes, it's been on the books for an
11 awful long time. Late last year we committed funding to the capital programme to
12 complete out the CPO because the funding line hadn't been identified. That has been
13 done now, so we will progress with that road to complete it. I know it has been done
14 in a very piecemeal manner and as you rightly say, it will link up the five schools
15 with the cycle way which will be fantastic. There isn't very much in the way of
16 funding coming from central government for new road infrastructure, as you know,
17 so we have to fund this from our own resources. So it's a significant spend for a
18 relatively small stretch of road, just because of the land values in the area. But we
19 will progress it and Joe might give further on that as well. Joe, you might start.
20 Thanks.

21 MR LANE: Okay. Councillor, as it happened, I was also in the Arboretum a bit
22 later than that and it had filled in a bit better at that stage. But on both the Ballinalea
23 one and the Arboretum, we will look at planning permissions. We will also look to
24 liaise with the gardaí and will see when we are there in June what we can do in that
25 area. There are two sides to that road, it depends if you looped around you can
26 actually come in from the other the side too, the Ballyronan Road. So there is a
27 little -- we'll take a look at that as best we can.

28

29 Chapel Road scheme, Councillor, we would hope to have more progress for the July
30 meeting. We are finalising the documentation. It is not being forgotten, we are
31 finalising documentation to proceed to tendering. It will be done over the coming
32 weeks, with continuing engagement with landowners. I know it is frustrating, but
33 there is progress being made.

34

1 The Arklow to Shillelagh Greenway, again, it wasn't lost -- there is work in finalising
2 the preferred option, it is going through the changes, they are the specific changes
3 with the TII route selection. We are currently liaising with a number of landowners
4 and there will be something finalised in the next couple of weeks on that one. Okay.
5 Yes, that's it I think.

6 MS O'GORMAN: Joe, sorry, the cliff walk. Lorraine will do that.

7 MR LANE: I will do the end bit of this. On top of the short-term and medium-term
8 solutions that will be discussed, we are also looking at acquisition, including CPO, to
9 regularise and future proof the line as it was or as close to that, but that is more of
10 long-term, but there is short-term solutions too on the route.

11 MS GALLAGHER: In relation to the Bray side, a consultant was appointed last year
12 to design a rock face stabilisation measure to make safe that portion of the cliff and
13 the proposed mitigation works will entail installation of rock bolts with active steel
14 mesh netting. Now we did go out to the market and unfortunately the costs that
15 came in was considered way too high for what we required done. So we are going
16 back out to the market and the tender period could be about four weeks. So you're
17 looking at the Council getting responses to our tender process in June or July of this
18 year. So that's the up-to-date position, Cathaoirleach and members.

19 MR NICHOLSON: Just in relation to the Greystones side, in relation to Councillor
20 Stokes queries: I do give updates as Councillor Stokes said, at the monthly meetings
21 at Greystones. In relation to the Greystones side, we have been working for the last
22 number of years trying to resolve land ownership issues, without much success. Joe
23 is now handling the CPO and we are going on that.

24

25 In the meantime, we have established an alternative route from Bray to Greystones
26 as close as we possibly could to the existing cliff walk, but obviously it is not along
27 the cliff walk for obvious reasons. We have the signs ready with maps, et cetera.
28 We have been in touch with Fred Verdier of Wicklow Tourism. He's going to
29 publicise the route. We will have those signs up and erected and we hope to have a
30 launch of it by the June bank holiday weekend. So these people can walk from Bray
31 to Greystones and back, but not necessarily on the cliff walk. The cliff walk is a
32 very difficult problem to solve. If it was easy, we would have done it by now. It is
33 exceptionally difficult. It means buying land and then rerouting it. In the meantime,
34 there will be an alternative and the CPO will continue.

1

2 I just make the point that even though we have gone down the CPO route, at any
3 stage we can still reach agreement with any of the landowners and avoid the CPO if
4 at all possible. So there is progress being made. I apologise it's not as quick as some
5 members would like, but it is a very, very, very difficult problem to solve. Because
6 the cliff walk has literally fallen into the sea. We can't just fix it, we have to re-route
7 it and that is very slow process. Thank you, members.

8 MS O'GORMAN: Leonora, you might come in on Greystones.

9 MS EARLS: Councillor Stokes, yes, we have appointed a firm to go out to the
10 market on those sites but we are awaiting confirmation of the regularisation of the
11 site registration. So as soon as we have that, that firm can start the work of going to
12 the market. Yes, thank you.

13 MS O'GORMAN: Brian.

14 MR GLEESON: Just in relation to the sports and recreation query that Councillor
15 O'Brien had, just to note that work has commenced on the development of a master
16 plan for lands at Brides Head and the Wicklow town relief road. They met with the
17 district staff, the consultants that have been appointed under the sports partnership
18 team, they have met with our district engineer, district administrator and when, I
19 suppose, the development and the report has come to a certain stage, it will be
20 brought to the members in the district for comments and input. Thank you.

21 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Brian. Councillor Edward Timmins.

22 COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: Thanks, Chairman. I put on my light just as Chairman
23 of the Baltinglass Municipal District, to pay a tribute to Breege and the support she
24 has shown us in her district over the last few years when she was district manager. I
25 would just like to thank her for her courtesy and her understanding and always her
26 honest answers and her very approachable nature. It's very, very much appreciated
27 and I suppose the best compliment I can pay her is that she understood our unique
28 district, being a rural person herself she certainly understood our issues and was able
29 to grasp what we were on about and connected with us as councillors, which is
30 primarily a rural district.

31

32 Just briefly on the management report. Page 74 talks about the new fire stations in
33 Baltinglass in Dunlavin, it refers: "Permission is expected in April from the National
34 Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management to proceed to part 8." So that's out

1 of date. I am just wondering has that permission been received or was it received in
2 April? Secondly, the other point that comes up a lot, I am sure we are all getting it,
3 people parking in disabled parking spots; it's happening all over the county. Thanks.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Councillor Joe Behan.

5 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. First of all, can I join with
6 everyone else in paying tribute to Breege and wishing her a long, happy and healthy
7 retirement. I have certainly appreciated the communication I have had with her over
8 many issues over the years, and as other Councillors have said, she has been
9 extremely approachable, had a good listening attitude to our particular situation. I
10 hope we have listened to hers as well. I think we have. The tributes that have come
11 to her from the west are inspirational really, that a director leaving an area has had
12 such compliments paid to her. So well done, Breege, and thank you for your service.

13

14 I have a couple of points I want to raise on the Chief Executive's report. There's
15 about four words in the Chief Executive's report on the famous bundled scheme that
16 I fought against here for many months where we were going to hand over land in
17 Rehills land in Bray which we had hoped to have affordable and social housing,
18 handed over to Dublin County Council, and we get four words saying, "scrapped, not
19 happening now". We wasted six or eight months fiddling around with Dublin City
20 Council to do something on that site to discover that at the end of it all it has now
21 been deemed not to be worthwhile to proceed with Dublin City Council because of
22 the costs of developing it.

23

24 Now, I am certainly glad that Dublin City Council are out of the picture completely
25 and I hope the same would have happened with Greystones, but it hasn't. But we
26 need to be in control of this site and we need to get moving, whoever is elected on
27 the 7th of June to get this site developed for affordable and social housing and I
28 certainly hope and expect that that's what the director will be spending his time at
29 over the next couple of weeks. That's point number one.

30

31 Secondly, it was very interesting to hear the presentation that we're celebrating our
32 125th anniversary as a local authority here and the fact that the powers were being
33 handed back from the land of gentry to the representatives of the people. And you
34 could say hooray for that and it is great that it happened. But we as elected members

1 of this Council during a development plan process last year made a very historic
2 decision with regard to our development plan and the whole question of vulture
3 funds and investment funds being denied access to apartment developments that
4 would be granted permission by this Council. You might recall that we had a very,
5 very long and detailed protracted process where the Council officials didn't agree
6 with it in the beginning, the planning regulator didn't agree with it in the beginning,
7 the Minister hummed and hawed and said we'd want to get legal advice on it, but he
8 never actually said we couldn't do it, and we had the courage as the elected
9 representatives of the people to pass that particular policy. So it is in our policy.
10 And an application came in a couple of months ago on the Boghall Road in Bray on
11 a site which was formerly the site of Dell factory for 178, I think it is, apartments and
12 a number of other facilities. And in fairness to the Council officials, and I want to
13 pay tribute to them and this is not a dig at anybody in particular or at officials in
14 general, in fairness the officials put in the condition on the planning, that the
15 planning was granted but subject to, and I will give you the wording so we are
16 absolutely clear what the wording was: "No occupation of any residential unit shall
17 occur until confirmation from a solicitor with professional indemnity insurance has
18 been submitted to and agreed in writing, confirming that the dwellings have been
19 sold in accordance with the condition." And this is the condition: "The first
20 occupation of any residential unit shall be by individual purchasers or by those
21 eligible for the occupation of social and/or affordable housing, including cost rental
22 housing and shall not be by a corporate entity." That was our hard work. We did
23 this. We achieved it. We were the first council in the country to do it and on the
24 125th anniversary you'd think we should be celebrating. What's happened? The
25 developer has appealed that condition to An Bord Pleanála. Local residents have
26 their own concerns about that development and some of them I would share. But I
27 was very happy that if there is going to be permission, we are putting in the condition
28 that we decided as a policy. What has happened now? The developer has appealed
29 it. The only thing he has appealed? Condition number 5, he wants that taken out.
30 He refers to the fact that previous decisions that were made by An Bord Pleanála, not
31 by us, but by An Bord Pleanála, didn't put in that condition in their new decisions in
32 Wicklow, therefore, why should it apply to them. This is the first time, as far as I
33 can see, the first test case for us as a Council. We passed the first part but we failed
34 miserably in the second part. Because unfortunately, I discovered on Friday, that

1 when the Council were asked for their opinion on what the developer had to say
2 about this, we decided not to respond. We as a corporate body did not stand and
3 defend the decision that we made at Wicklow County Council as elected members.

4
5 Now, it has already been said to me by senior people here in the organisation, well,
6 we put in the condition, that should be enough. But we often -- we do put in
7 submissions when decisions are appealed. And I am deeply, deeply disappointed
8 that we didn't take the opportunity, as this is a test case, to come back and say this is
9 an intrinsic part of our policy and we want to get rid of the scourge of these
10 investment funds taking over entire developments and denying first-time buyers the
11 opportunity to buy them. We didn't go to the battle, we didn't defend it; we've left it
12 up to the board. And if the board don't put in that condition, where are we going to
13 be then?

14
15 Now, I second An Bord Pleanála this morning to see is it too late for our officials to
16 get back to the board and say, hold on a minute, this is very important. It is part of
17 our policy. But I was told flatly by An Bord Pleanála, you're too late. So now we're
18 left in the hands of the board and one of the things that really concerns me is that this
19 will now be used as a test case not only in this county, but around the country. And
20 the Government have a policy that no housing developments can be sold to
21 investment funds, but their policy is still that apartments can be sold to investment
22 funds and the developer is saying, it is government policy, don't mind them in
23 Wicklow, go ahead and don't put in that condition. I am very disappointed. I would
24 like to hear what the Chief Executive -- I had a brief discussion with her before
25 lunch, I would like to hear her make a comment on it because I think it is very, very
26 important that the people of this county know where does she stand in regard to this
27 matter.

28
29 Last two points very quickly: I want to propose that we writes to the National
30 Transport Authority with regard to the withdrawal of the 184 bus to the people of the
31 Glen of the Downs who are going to be severely affected when that bus is taken
32 away. The alleged policy of the Green Party Minister is, you know, get people out of
33 the cars, and we know where that has got us with the Herbert Road and other areas,
34 but they are actually taking a bus route away from people in the Glenview, and most

1 significantly, people who are working in the Glenview Hotel who don't have
2 transport and who are going to be badly affected by that. I want to propose that we
3 write to the Minister and to the NTA on that one.

4
5 Finally, I just want to celebrate with councillors and let councillors know if they
6 don't already know, that the people of Bray, particularly the people of Little Bray had
7 a magnificent victory over this Council and An Bord Pleanála last Tuesday in the
8 High Court. You may recall that there was a major issue about a public transport
9 bridge being built across the old Bray Golf Club in Bray. Three organisations got
10 together, save the flood plane group, people who were worried about welfare, health
11 and survival of the swans in the Bray Harbour and the residents at the estate at the
12 end of -- Seapoint Court. Thanks, Councillor Ferris. They came together. They
13 looked for an environmental and appropriate assessment to be done, asked An Bord
14 Pleanála to do it, because they wanted to have that particular site properly screened.
15 An Bord Pleanála said no. They had the courage of their convictions, they took a
16 judicial review. One leading person, Noeleen McManus, basically put herself
17 forward as being the representative of those three groups. They had a very worrying
18 number of months leading up to the decision, but they won. The Court has quashed
19 the decision of An Bord Pleanála and has asked the board to go back and deal with
20 this in terms of the law that applies to these sites.

21

22 So while we're celebrating 125 years of the Council, we can celebrate at least the
23 victory of ordinary local people in regards to that decision. Thanks, Cathaoirleach

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Lourda Scott.

25 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Cathaoirleach, I have got to go.

26 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay.

27 COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Thanks, Cathaoirleach and thank you, Chief Executive, for
28 the report. I have a couple of questions. First, I want to join in paying tribute to
29 Breege whom I had the pleasure of working with as chair of the Climate SPC. I
30 hope being involved with the Climate SPC, Breege, was one of your highlights along
31 with working in west Wicklow as well. And just to say I got to know Breege quite
32 well there and she was a delight to work with, so knowledgeable, so enthusiastic and
33 passionate about climate and biodiversity. It was a new policy committee so we had
34 a lot of work to do. There was a lot of finding our way at the start. It was great to be

1 able to work with somebody at such a senior level that was so approachable to easy
2 to deal with.

3

4 Wishing you all the best in your retirement. Breege, if you want to continue and
5 climate and biodiversity work in the Greystones district, I will hook you up with
6 everybody down there. I will find plenty of work for you there. Thank you very
7 much for all your work and time and energy.

8

9 So I just had a few questions on the Chief Executive's report. Largely, sort of,
10 following up pieces which I have maybe worked on previously in case I don't have
11 the opportunity to ask again. The first thing was just a query around the community
12 recognition fund for 2023, and I know we had some funds allocated to Greystones
13 for embellishments in Burnaby Park. I know on the Chief Executive's report it is
14 saying they will be finished in quarter 3 2024, I am wondering is that still on target
15 as time is ticking on.

16

17 My second question was around the community gardens and the expressions of
18 interest closed on the 26th of April. I am wondering when we would anticipate
19 hearing any summary of the expressions of interests that were sent in and a plan of
20 action following that.

21

22 The next thing was around the E-Bolt scheme and I note that there is going to be free
23 trips on the E-Bolts in Bray for bike week which I think is a really good idea. Again,
24 I just want a bit of clarification. I believe there was an expression of interest sent out
25 for a tender to expand the scheme across the county but I just note on the Chief
26 Executive's report it does mention that they are awaiting contracts from the legal
27 team for Bray and Greystones. I suppose really my question is: When will we see
28 these E-bikes, whether from E-Bolt or another company, coming into Greystones?
29 Would be very anxious to see them in situ before the summertime.

30

31 Another one, actually, my colleagues brought this up in a related manner about
32 recreational facilities. I was going to remind the Council that we did have a social
33 infrastructure audit carried out in the Greystones district, I think it was in 2021, it is a
34 few years ago. Really what I was looking for was an update as to what is going to be

1 done to address the issues raised in that audit report. It was very thorough, really
2 pinpointed deficiencies around sporting and recreational needs in the area that we
3 would know from living there and know from getting representations from people.
4 And I would just like to see, I suppose, really a plan of action to address the issues
5 raised rather than it just being another report left to gather dust on the shelf.

6

7 Finally, I know this gets brought up regularly, but again as we go canvassing door to
8 door one of the very bread-and-butter issues that gets raised to me all the time is the
9 lack of road markings across the district. I know it is not solely related to
10 Greystones, but is across the county. It is raised everywhere. It is really, really
11 noticeable, you know, along the roads across the Greystones district, particularly
12 around the Blacklion Manor Road, around Lidl. People have expressed concerns
13 about safety, exiting a very, very busy shopping car park. There are no clear
14 markings. The previous markings from the old entrance into that shop are still
15 visible. It is leading to confusion. There is lack of markings coming out of estates,
16 so it is not clear how to join the roads. We have been told -- I have raised this at our
17 local MD and we are told there is an issue with lack of funding. Again, I am
18 wondering what is the plan to address this because it is something that is very
19 noticeable and causing concern to people. Yes, that's it. Thank you.

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Councillor Gerry Walsh.

21 COUNCILLOR WALSH: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, and thanks to the Chief
22 Executive for the report. I would also like to extend best wishes to Breege on her
23 retirement and just want to thank you, Breege, personally for all your help and
24 support over the last ten years. All the best.

25

26 Just on the report, under housing maintenance and the funding allocation there for
27 2024, and there's reference to boiler maintenance, that was only invoiced late for
28 2023, that is coming out of the 2024 allocation. Have the department addressed this
29 issue as yet, or how is it going to impact on the current boiler maintenance issues for
30 2024?

31

32 Just moving on then to the Greystones Enterprise Hub, I see it is progressing there in
33 terms of fit outs the marketing and the management of the facility. There are issue
34 about it funding there. I think there is a proposal or application to Enterprise Ireland

1 in relation to the funding. Is that funding for the fit out of the building, just to get
2 some clarification on that or if there is any further update on that funding application,
3 or when we can see a timeline on the progress there.

4
5 Then just on coastal erosion, we did have a presentation -- the members of the
6 municipal district had a presentation last February from Arup representatives, Mark
7 Costello was present and we had Merlin Ovington as well from this office. It was in
8 relation to the Greystones north beach, the funding there that was being submitted to
9 the OPW. Again there is a possibility that the ECRIPP project might come in and
10 fund that. Again looking for an update on that. Thank you.

11 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Councillor Anne Ferris.

12 COUNCILLOR FERRIS: Thanks very much, Cathaoirleach. Cathaoirleach, I want
13 to take up following what Councillor Behan said in relation to the celebration after
14 the judicial review. Now, I think members would certainly remember that I raised
15 the whole issue of the sustainable bridge back a couple of years ago. As a resident of
16 Seapoint Court, my residents association were one of the three organisations in, I
17 suppose, the organisation cup which call themselves Save Bray for the purpose of the
18 judicial review. I think this is great. You know, we all have concerns about the
19 bridge going over the river at the point there at the entrance of Seapoint Court.
20 Because already there is a blind spot in Seapoint Court when you're trying to drive
21 out of it. Also, the other issue was about our swan neighbours down at the harbour
22 and all the danger it would impose on them.

23

24 Now there is no doubt that we do need a second bridge over the River Dargle, but we
25 need this bridge for cars. You know, a lot of people thought that the bridge being
26 proposed was for cars, but it wasn't. It was just for public transport and cyclists and
27 pedestrians. But certainly Seapoint Court is not the place to be doing it.

28

29 I had urged the people down here in Wicklow County Council to have a look at the
30 wider picture because there was all kinds of talk about when the LUAS comes to
31 Bray and where would that finish up. We were told adjacent to the Dart station or
32 the railway station and I couldn't figure out for the life of me exactly how a bridge
33 would go over there. I don't know if there was some idea about using the Carlisle
34 grounds or whatever. Really that is a discussion for another day.

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I am absolutely delighted on behalf of the residents of Seapoint Court and the other organisations that Judge Hyland has ruled that An Bord Pleanála will have to carry out a screening determination.

Also on that note, I suppose, An Bord Pleanála had asked for a Natura statement to be done by Wicklow County Council on the whole issue and that was never, as far as I understand, carried out. So I would like to know -- well I am not too sure, I don't want to put the Chief Executive on the spot because it is really only fresh news, but, to be honest I just hope that instead of wasting more money, I hope that the whole proposal is just knocked on the head. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Chief Executive, I will hand over to yourself.

MS O'GORMAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, and thank you again, members. Joe might come in on the fire station's update in a moment and also he might comment on -- well, we certainly write to the NTA and the Minister about the 184 bus withdrawal. That is not an issue at all. The road markings, I know it is sometimes a district level, but Joe might make an overall comment about road markings in the county in a moment.

Councillor Behan, in relation to the matter you raised around the planning application and where it is at at the moment. Obviously, it is effectively a live application because it is still with the board. The Council and I firmly stand behind the development plan and the motion that was passed by the members of this Council to insert that part into the policy document, which is the overarching document from the county. Everything else that we do stems from the County Development Plan.

I suppose, at the time it was felt that the planner's report was a detailed enough submission to stand up your objectives of the development plan and we do not comment on every application that comes under appeal. I do hear your point about this potentially being a test case. The board have to be minded to our development plan, they have to have regard to it and it is clearly there and clearly stated. We will have to await the outcome of the board. It was felt internally here that the planner's report was detailed and significant enough to stand up and didn't require any further comment from the Council at the time.

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Councillor Scott, in relation to the community recognition fund, I'll ask Michael to come in on that and Michael might also speak about the audit report of the recreational facilities in the Greystones area and also on the housing maintenance, the department have addressed, and the boiler maintenance programme. Generally, Counsellor Walsh, we don't get additional funding from central government until the back end of Q3 as they operate on a cash accounting basis, as you know, and it's towards the end when they are in their budgetary cycle is when additional funds tend to come to us, but Michael might have more detailed decision for you on that.

Leonora will talk about the Enterprise Hub and the application to EI. Breege will come in on the coastal erosion on the north beach and also on the community gardens.

Just in relation to the Natura report, I don't know Leonora, if you might have a comment on that as well. We'll start with Joe again, please.

MR LANE: I'll also deal with Rehills, but that's okay too. I am not going back in to the advantages and the reasons for the PPP, but just the application was subject to good governance as required by public expenditure. So they went through the expenditure. We are currently examining the costs prepared by the PPP, appoint a QS team with an objective of minimising these costs and submitting a stage one application to the department. So we will be attempting to do our own, but it will be informed by the amount of work that has been done to date. So it hasn't been wasted. The application will have to address some of the issues. They are not going to go away. The costs are fairly... The densities will be higher density there and therefore how are we going to deal with that, and some of those will still be based on costs and the bridge and access to the bridge, but we haven't forgotten it ourselves. So I accept what you are saying.

As regards road marking, I think at the March or April meeting, one of the earlier meetings I was at, we undertook to take a review of the expenditure and we have contacted municipal engineers to try to work out how much expenditure is being incurred and what should be incurred and is there any other sourcing bar our own. If there are individual areas, again you can send it to me but the municipal engineers will always be watching that. They do regular line marking tenders. So if there is anywhere in the municipal you can cc me and we can try to include those on a local

1 register so we know exactly what is going on in that regard and the amount of money
2 that is required.

3 MS O'GORMAN: Fire stations.

4 MR LANE: Sorry, Aidan will be in before 4 o'clock and I will get an exact wording
5 when I talk with Aidan, the chief fire officer will be in before 4 o'clock or at 4.

6 MR NICHOLSON: Just a couple of queries: Disabled parking spots. Yes, one of
7 the most disgusting activities anybody can do is park in disabled parking spot when
8 they haven't got an appropriate sticker. It is something that there's no excuse for.
9 We should have adopted a zero tolerance. We have developed an app that will
10 shortly be developed where members of the public, if they see a car parked without
11 displaying a ticket can send a message. That depends on a warden close by that they
12 can go up and put a ticket on it. Just to remind members that the gardaí also have
13 enforcement powers. Really there should be zero tolerance for people parking in
14 disabled parking spots. There is no excuse for it.

15

16 Community response recognition fund 2023, yes, they're all on target. Most of them
17 are finished, some nearing completion. The Greystones one hasn't started yet.
18 Everything is lined up to start. All that work will be finished, Councillor Scott, in
19 the current year. Hopefully by quarter 3. If not quarter 3, certainly by the end. We
20 have to finish them by the end of this year to get the money, so we will spend them
21 by the end of this year. We are just finalising some details about locations of various
22 works, et cetera.

23

24 The 2024 scheme the closing date for expression of interest was last Friday. We got
25 a lot of applications in, that's another 1.6 million for this year. Again, some great
26 projects there which will bring huge benefits to the communities who have taken in
27 our friends from our countries.

28

29 Sports audits: The real reason they did the sports audits in each of the five MDs was
30 as a document to use when we are meeting developers. Obviously, we can't provide
31 sporting facilities, we wouldn't have the land available for that. So we use that
32 document when planning permission is being sought by primarily housing
33 developments. We meet the developer. We go through the audit. We show them
34 what is needed from the audit and then we ask them to provide as part, if they are

1 successful in their planning application. That is really the purpose of the audits.
2 Notwithstanding that, we also are very aware of what is needed in all the areas. If
3 we do have any spare land, we will try and facilitate it, but most of that will come
4 from the developers as part of community gain. We have been very successful in
5 most recent planning applications, you will see a direct correlation between what was
6 provided and what was included in those audits. So there is no surprise there.

7

8 Housing maintenance. Just to clarify, response maintenance we fund that ourselves.
9 We have a big budget for that across the MDs. For planned maintenance, we get a
10 funding allocation from the department which we spend every year. Normally we
11 pick one particular area and we do it. Last year we picked boiler maintenance. This
12 year we are being electrics. Last year we were a bit late in sending the claim so we
13 are following up with the department in the hope they will give us an allocation for
14 this year to do our electrical work and that we will get the money back for boiler
15 maintenance last year. We will follow it up with the department. We are confident
16 we will get the money and I will keep the members updated on that. Thank you.

17 MS KILKENNY: First, just in relation to the communal gardens and, yes,
18 Councillor Scott, the submissions we accepted up until 26th April, 40 submissions
19 were received and there was very good geographic spread in response, you know,
20 with regard to Wicklow Town being the area with most demand. There has been a
21 diverse range of groups and individuals that submitted an expressions of interest and
22 key areas seem to be in relation to assistance in terms of funding for project
23 development and provision of land and assistance in supplying water and stuff to
24 site. So we will have to review, you know, the type of expressions of interest and
25 what sort of funding might be available to assist people. So there's huge opportunity
26 for networking and sharing of information. So a report will be prepared and it will
27 probably be done within the next month is what I would say.

28

29 Yes, on the second issue by Councillor Walsh, in relation to north beach, yes, it is
30 still within ECRIPP and as you said, the OPW have given us funding if there is a
31 gap. Still the view of the Council would be, if it can be incorporated within the
32 ECRIPP project that would be the best way. As you know Marc Devreaux, he's on a
33 steering committee associated with that. Marc just isn't here today but I will follow
34 up and ask him if he will contact you directly just to say where that is currently at.

1

2 We did organise for Arups to come in and speak to the Greystones Municipal
3 District just in relation to the nourishment of the north beach and the kind of big
4 decisions that would be required if people were asking for things like rock armour.
5 So rock armour will actually do away with the beach, so beach nourishment may be
6 the way going forward. Also the originally ECRIPP proposals were these growing
7 areas, that might be the most appropriate mechanism and that's from the Council's
8 point of view on that ECRIPP steering committee is what we will be advocating as a
9 more sustainable measure to protect the beach as much as possible. But at the end of
10 the day, it is a natural process and I think Arups have demonstrated where the first
11 line of the railway was and how far it had moved in. So it is just part of the natural
12 process. We do want to try and slow it down. Again, with the beach nourishment,
13 that will help it in the long run. But I will leave a note for Marc to get back to you
14 with an update of where that is currently at.

15 MS EARLS: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Councillor Walsh, yes, the money we are
16 seeking from Enterprise Ireland is to fit out the Greystones Enterprise Hub. So we
17 met with Enterprise Ireland last week and we are meeting with them again before the
18 end of the month just to see what options are available to us and what is the best way
19 to proceed with it. So we will keep you informed on that.

20

21 Councillor Behan and Councillor Ferris, in relation to the Bray sustainable bridge, so
22 we were awaiting the outcome of that case just to see. So we haven't done any work
23 on the NIS. We are also using the opportunity to revisit the options to see, you
24 know, what road we should then take. Thank you.

25 MS GALLAGHER: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Just in relation to the extension of the
26 Bolt scheme to the other municipal districts, I know that the district engineers of the
27 other four municipal districts have been discussing this together but just to say that
28 Bray Municipal District has entered into contract with Bolt for the provision of that
29 service. We have provided the infrastructure so pending expressions of interest and
30 a procurement process, Bray Municipal District will continue with the agreement
31 that it has with Bolt.

32 MS PURCELL: Just on a point of order, Councillor Behan, if a motion isn't listed, it
33 shouldn't come up from the floor. We need a seconder for it. Also, we are supposed
34 to get a copy of the wording. But if you can say the wording out for the letter that

1 you are talking about to the letter to the Minister and to the NTA just to make sure I
2 get the wording correct. And then if we have a seconder and if everybody is
3 agreeing that, that's fine. Thanks.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: Joe, do you want to turn on your mic there? Oh you can't.
5 Sorry. I'll bring you back -- you can go now.

6 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Thanks. I propose that Wicklow County Council writes
7 to the Minister for Transport and the NTA expressing our concern at the withdrawal
8 of the 184 bus service for the people of the Glen of the Downs.

9 COUNCILLOR CULLEN: I am happy to second that.

10 MS PURCELL: Seconded by Councillor Cullen. Is everybody in agreement?

11 (Agreed.) Thanks.

12 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Pat Kennedy, I'm terribly sorry, can I get you to
13 turn off yours and we will let Councillor Leonard back in there. She had turned off
14 hers to let Councillor Behan in, but you can come back in then in a minute.

15 Councillor Erika Doyle.

16 COUNCILLOR DOYLE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Thank you. I would just like
17 to join my colleagues in wishing Breege well. As far as I remember, she picked a
18 big day to make the announcement. I think she was overshadowed fairly quickly
19 after she made it and, Breege, we haven't had a huge amount to do with each other
20 but what we have, I have always found you fantastic to work with and very helpful.
21 So I wish you well in the adventures that come next.

22

23 Fantastic to hear in Bray that we are going to continue with the Bolt arrangement. I
24 still get, I think it's probably the thing I get most contact about, almost all positive.
25 It's a fantastic scheme for Bray and it's had I think unexpected benefits that we
26 couldn't have foreseen and I am not sure Bolt could have seen the success story that
27 it has turned out to be. So I am delighted to hear that pending all the appropriate
28 things to be done, that we will continue with that, that is fantastic.

29

30 I was pleased also to hear the news of the sustainable bridge but a little confused
31 with maybe what some of the other Councillors have said, because certainly the
32 residents that I met with, most of them were supportive of the idea of there being a
33 bridge. They recognise the need for a bridge, but not for cars. Because if you do
34 that, all you're doing is bringing more cars and more traffic congestion right into the

1 town centre, right into the residential areas where we actually need those people to
2 be in public transport to remove the cars but to allow people to move from A to B.
3 And certainly the residents I met with from Seapoint Court and Seapoint Road were
4 hugely concerned about the traffic safety aspect of what I viewed as half a bridge and
5 I told them on that basis that I would not be able to support it. My opinion is still
6 that if half a bridge that ends in a residential area were to come before us, I would
7 not be able to support it for those reasons.

8
9 Just something that I think we deal with here in Wicklow is water safety and it's
10 coming up again and again. I would like to ask for a bit of support for some signage
11 for the seafront in Bray in and around, I suppose, various things that we would view
12 as local knowledge. So we have the area of the seafront where people like to swim
13 and unfortunately it's where there are rip currents and we have had some really
14 unfortunate - well more than unfortunate, some tragedies in that area. I know there
15 are no swimming signs, but I would really love to see some kind of explanatory
16 notes about that area, about the areas that are safe, about the rip currents and just a
17 bit more information that we can provide people with. Because sometimes when
18 people see a sign telling them not to do so, you know, they're going to go and do it
19 anyway. I am wondering about the possibility of, could we maybe in Bray talk to the
20 water safety officer and look and see if we could get some funding for some
21 information boards. I think they're very useful for tourists, and locals and visitors.

22
23 Just, finally, I have a great amount of respect for the Chief Executive but, Chief
24 Executive, I did write to you in February and I did flag it here in a previous meeting,
25 and I did not receive a response and I am a little bit disappointed. Now, I don't take
26 up a huge amount of time in meetings in Wicklow, so I am going to read the email
27 now. It's quite short. I don't know if I am going to be back here and I suppose none
28 of us do, some more than others, maybe, but I would like this on the record, you
29 know, if I am not to return. And it's just about active travel and particularly my
30 district in Bray and it's something I feel very important about, that people who want
31 to walk or cycle can do so safely and that's ultimately what it is. It is better for
32 pedestrians, better for cyclists, better for anybody with mobility issues and it is better
33 for drivers as well actually, it is better for air quality. There's lot list of reasons. I
34 did write to you on 12th February, I am going to read it now it is quite shored: "I am

1 writing to you to express my disappointment in this Local Authority's performance in
2 relation to NTA funded active travel projects, particularly in my own district of Bray.
3 The well worn cry of inadequate central funding is not a factor here as there is record
4 funding available to local authorities. Even among colleagues in other local
5 authorities, Wicklow has become known as something of a laggard in this regard. I
6 have full faith in the active travel staff and our engineering staff in Bray. However,
7 staffing issues was the response I received from the NTA liaison upon querying the
8 lack of action on projects in Bray. I can only deduce then that it is the quantity or
9 grade of staff available to lead projects that is the issue. Can you shed any light on
10 the reasons why Wicklow is not performing as it should in this regard? Is there an
11 issue attracting or retaining staff in this area? I know you are aware that Active
12 Travel is so much more than cycle schemes. Schemes that work well can enhance
13 communities and the knock-on effects of modal change and the resultant reduction in
14 emissions, and the impact on air quality, lifestyle change, fitness opportunities and
15 social change can be far reaching. I would like to why that you give this the matter
16 your attention."

17

18 So, Chief Executive, in light of the fact that I may not be returning after the summer
19 break, I would very much appreciate if you could respond to that now. Thank you
20 very much.

21 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Patsy Glennon.

22 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Firstly, I'd like to join with
23 my colleagues who have already spoken about Breege, our manager, who has
24 decided to retire and desert. Breege is a very kind lady. The met her here the very
25 first day I was in the chambers, I met her here. She was I think number 2 to Joe at
26 that time on housing but brought a compassion and a humanist to the whole
27 procedure that day. She spoke to us like as if they knew us. She made us all feel
28 very welcome as new councillors and I haven't forgotten that to her.

29 Later that day we were brought on a drive by Sorcha who is here behind me and we
30 were brought out around Greystones and various parts where the wealth that was on
31 display was quite strange for people coming from West Wicklow, and I say that with
32 sincerity.

33 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Go away out of that.

34 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Anyway, you are going to be very surprised that I

1 welcome a lot of the improvements that happened in West Wicklow under Breege's
2 stewardship. I would like to acknowledge the developments in the proposed relief
3 road in Blessington. That has been advanced significantly under her watchful eye
4 along with the engineering staff. Footpaths in Hollywood, two footpaths and the
5 latest one to the GAA pitch for kids is a great improvement. A new junction at
6 Lockstown due to be open next week, another great improvement in the area. Road
7 improvements at Saunders Grove and the proposed fire station that Councillor
8 Timmins has asked about and Joe is going to come back with some answers on later.

9

10 I really acknowledge her contribution to West Wicklow and I acknowledge the
11 improvements that have been made under her stewardship.

12

13 I think as a municipal district we all worked well. Again, Vincent was leader of our
14 pack insofar as the long serving councillor and it is always a steady pair of hands,
15 and I wish him well in his decision to retire. Like many of the other councillors, I
16 am not sure I will be back here again. This might be my own last day here as applies
17 to us all, I suppose. That's democracy. But whatever happens in the future, I do
18 think that whoever replaces Breege out west needs to keep the focus on bringing us
19 up to the standards of the rest of the county. We need our new N81. My two Green
20 Party councillors in front of me, I hope they encourage Minister Ryan to relinquish
21 his view that we don't. I don't think anything will ever happen out in West Wicklow
22 of any great significance in an economic sense until we get proper infrastructure.
23 We need an improved bus transport system. The 65 bus is not fit for purpose.
24 Councillor Behan, I was going to ask you to include the 65 but he's formalised his
25 motion since so I do know that that is probably closed. But the 65 bus travels -- if
26 you miss the half one you've to wait until half three to the next bus to get out to West
27 Wicklow. There is no other transport system coming from Dublin. It's a joke there.
28 Was a better transport system in Blessington and West Wicklow. The 65 bus used to
29 turn at Hollywood Cross when I was a kid, which is quite a length ago. It doesn't
30 come near it anymore. So public transport has gone backwards rather than forwards.
31 And people say get out of your car, but the reality is there's no alternatives out our
32 way and it needs to be addressed. We need to park and ride.

33

34 I suppose, really, the only formal question I have is to ask Leonora where is that at.

1 We need an update on the park and ride out west. I notice there were great
2 developments on the one in East Wicklow, but once again we seem to be left a bit on
3 the hind teat. Whoever replaces Breege Kilkenny in West Wicklow will have big
4 shoes to fill, but whoever it is needs to concentrate on getting fairness for our part of
5 the county. Thank you very much.

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Avril Cronin.

7 COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Thank you very much. That'll be a hard act to follow
8 now from Councillor Glennon, those nice words that he said there for Breege, but I
9 would like to start off my contribution as well, to acknowledge the work that Breege
10 has done in our area. We always say that the west is a unique district for our
11 geographical spread and how rural our district is, but we're also very unique in the
12 district team that we have over in West Wicklow under the management of Breege. I
13 think when it comes to fighting for the west, there certainly is a united front from the
14 six councillors here, and I know that when Breege is at her managerial meetings, I
15 know that she certainly is fighting for the west at every opportunity and that doesn't
16 go unnoticed as well among the councillors and the staff over in the district office.

17

18 Breege has not only been a great colleague, but I think over the years she has been a
19 great friend to us as well and we have had many laughs as well as getting a lot of
20 work done. I hope that will continue and we will continue our friendship Breege.
21 We will keep the 17th of March free every year. We will continue on our little
22 tradition.

23

24 Now, just back to the manager's report, following on from Councillor Glennon, that
25 was actually top of my agenda as well, the public transport in the area. A couple of
26 months ago I asked the Council to write to the NTA about the local link service.
27 Although we have seen huge improvements in the area for local link in West
28 Wicklow, there are many small villages that are still missing out. I am just
29 wondering has the Council made any contact with the NTA? Have they followed on
30 from my query the last time? Has anything progressed there? And also the 65 bus
31 route, the current capacity cannot meet the demand. There's huge demand for the 65
32 bus route in Blessington. It is the only bus route we have after 5:30 coming out of
33 Dublin to West Wicklow. But it's currently the way it is at the moment, it is full
34 capacity every evening and unfortunately a number of people are being left on the

1 side of the road because there's not enough room on the bus. You might respond to
2 the first part about it local link and if nothing has been done from the Council level
3 in relation to contacting NTA, you might include 65 in your correspondence with the
4 NTA.

5

6 I also raised issue of supports for businesses two months ago at our Council meeting
7 and I was told I would get a response written to me because we ran out of time, but
8 unfortunately I haven't received anything back. It was in relation to supports for new
9 businesses. Businesses have contacted me over the past number of months that are
10 setting up new businesses in the area. While there's lots of training available, there's
11 very few grants available when we look at other county councils. Now I know
12 everything comes down to funding but I do think even something simple like a shop
13 front grant or a streetscape scheme are also very beneficial for new businesses
14 starting up.

15

16 My last two issues that I would just like to raise is public lighting. I have brought it
17 up numerous times both at this meeting and at our district meeting. It is very
18 difficult to get new lights on our streets in West Wicklow due to funding. Any time I
19 raise it I am told that we don't have the funds and to bring it up at the Council
20 meeting to see if there's any funding through the central Council, if there's anything
21 there for new public lighting. We have many areas that are left in the dark, streets
22 that don't actually have any lights on them. It is something that comes up time and
23 time again.

24

25 Finally, in relation to recreational lands, we have a number of clubs in Blessington
26 that have made submissions to the local area plan in relation to recreational lands.
27 There's a huge demand for sporting fields in the area. It is something that comes up
28 time and time again. We are still awaiting the development of the master plan for
29 Burgage. I am not actually sure where that is at the moment. I don't think anybody
30 in our district seems to -- the six councillors, we don't seem to have any update
31 recently on what's actually happening there. So you might provide me with an
32 update on those lands please. Thank you.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Shay Cullen.

34 COUNCILLOR CULLEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Like previous speakers

1 Councillor Doyle and Councillor Glennon, I can assure you this is my last
2 contribution to this Council. Firstly, I want to wish Breege all the best for your
3 future adventures. You have been a great credit to Wicklow County Council. I
4 suppose I know you personally and professionally and I want you to enjoy and look
5 forward to the rest of your retirement. You well deserve it.

6

7 Just moving on, a couple of points I want to make: It was mentioned earlier about
8 amenities and facilities in particular for the Wicklow district, and over three years
9 ago former CEO, Frank Curran, gave the go ahead for master plan for Brides Head.
10 I know I have had this discussion on and on and on for three years. Brian said
11 recently there that consultants were approved. I actually walked this land over two
12 years ago with consultants and, I suppose, my annoyance and disappointment is why
13 does it take so long for anything to happen in terms of when agreements are made,
14 that we are three years down the road and we're no better off than we were three
15 years ago. I think it is just not good enough in this day and age. We are building
16 house after house in the Wicklow district and we are lacking amenities from
17 Wicklow to Rathnew to Ashford to Newtown, right across the district and this has to
18 be given priority to the new Council. There's no question about it in my opinion.
19 We are doing a reasonably good job providing housing, but we have to pick up the
20 pace in terms of what we can offer. Just a quick example: There's 800 houses being
21 built in new town at 10,000 a house contributions is 8 million. So, look, the money
22 is coming in. We need to start using it in all of these locations to make life better for
23 the people living in these areas.

24

25 There was another point made earlier about the Arboretum in Kilquade. I think there
26 was 3 million investment. We spoke at length about this at our district meeting
27 recently, about the extra traffic, volume of traffic on the Kilquade Road, possibly
28 lack of parking and there's also flooding issues. I suppose, on the bigger picture I
29 would like to see the planners when they're making decisions on these types of
30 facilities, that there is enough parking provided for what has been proposed.
31 Because this has, at this stage where it is a very good news story for that part of
32 Wicklow, it is creating its own problems in terms of people living in those areas.
33 Again, I think the bigger picture is we need to look more closely at the conditioning
34 of our planning permission decisions.

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Finally, I want to move on to an issue that it's hard to speak about but I can't let this day go without mentioning the shocking scenes that played out in my own village of Newtownmountkennedy over the last number of weeks. And before I get into that, I just want to put on record my disappointment as a member of a government party in how this whole immigration policy has been handled to date.

It's very clear to me that the Government are reacting to situations rather than being proactive. I am very obviously aware that it is a difficult issue to solve but at the end of the day, we do not have the accommodation in this country for a free-flowing immigration policy welcoming everybody to this country. It just cannot continue. And unfortunately something is going to have to be done to curtail the numbers and slow down the amount of immigrants that are seeking protection in this county. At this particular point in time the division that is being created across this country is extremely disconcerting.

On the other hand, I have to mention the sinister ploy by the far-right groups. Also, I have to call out being supported by certain members of this Council to escalate tensions, particularly in Newtown, as I have said, Annamoe, Wicklow, Aughrim and West Wicklow. And I stood supporting the people of Newtown before these activists arrived on the scene and basically caused mayhem in a village of Newtown.
COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: There's no support in West Wicklow.

COUNCILLOR CULLEN: I am not finished.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor O'Neill, let Councillor Cullen finish. Everyone is going to get their chance to speak.

COUNCILLOR CULLEN: I listened to an interview from a Councillor that talked about free speech. I just want to see is this free speech when you walk behind banners saying "Ireland for the Irish", "Stop the Plantation", "The filthy effing vermin should be in cages". Is that free speech? Is that what we are about in this country? Ask yourselves that question.

It is sad that public representatives have created a pastime for themselves going around this county inciting fear, giving misinformation, creating divisions in communities, because that is exactly what is happening, and it is all for self interest.

1 Which is more concerning, I have not heard once any of those public reps call this
2 language out for what it is. On the contrary, by not calling it out, it is actually
3 defending this type of behaviour.

4
5 So, I suppose, as I depart this scene of the Council I say to anybody that's lucky
6 enough to be elected in June, what road do you want to go down? Do you want to go
7 down the road of division, creating fear in communities right across this county, or
8 do you want to go down a road where you heal the division and live and work with
9 your neighbours, and create a society in Ireland that we can all live in? Thank you.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: Chief Executive, I will let you come in.

11 MS O'GORMAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, and thank you members. Firstly to
12 Councillor Doyle, I want to apologise, I missed that email. I would say I will get
13 you a response before tomorrow is out on that. I do sincerely apologise for that.
14 Members, if you are emailing me, I am not making excuses, just
15 chiefexecutive@wicklowcoco is a better email address because my PA will pick up
16 everything as well as myself. The volume of emails that come through my account
17 are significant. I am sure you all have the same problem as well. I do sincerely
18 apologise. I will get a reply to you on that.

19
20 In relation to the notice boards, seafront, Lorraine might comment on that in a
21 moment.

22
23 A number of you, I suppose, have mentioned issues with public transport and bus
24 services. I mean it's not within my gift, I suppose, to solve those issues but, again,
25 there seems to be a desire to expand that, or to write about the 65 bus route and local
26 link. We did correspond on the local link. I know there have been improvements to
27 the local link services. They attend our older persons alliance meetings and they
28 give very regular updates on what is going on and it is very welcome but it is not
29 enough. So we will continue to pursue that. Because every service that they have
30 introduced or enhanced, the uptake has been significant by members of the public
31 which demonstrates that there is a clear need for it, but we will certainly correspond
32 with them again on that.

33

34 Apologies again, Councillor Cronin, I thought you did get a reply on the funding for

1 potential supports for new businesses. Shop front grant schemes and streetscape
2 schemes, there is a streetscape scheme under the RDF programme or there was one
3 as part of that and that can certainly been considered there. Shop front improvement
4 schemes, in my experience they haven't worked particularly well. I have been in a
5 number of counties where they have been. You might get one business that is very
6 enthusiastic about it, but unless you get a number of businesses involved to buy in to
7 colour schemes and all of that, it can be a fruitless exercise unfortunately. We can
8 certainly, look it, there is the new cost of business scheme that is out at the moment
9 for rate payers that the Department of Enterprise is running and the uptake in
10 Wicklow has been significantly high. We are probably in the top five counties in the
11 country in terms of uptake of that scheme which is a direct cash injection back to
12 businesses. I do believe there might be an extension to that scheme specifically
13 targeting hospitality businesses as well in the coming weeks as part of the
14 Government's commitment to help small businesses. So any funding we can
15 leverage, we certainly will on that.

16

17 I might get -- the recreational lands, I know the LAP is still ongoing. And the
18 Burgage plan, Leonora might speak to that.

19

20 Councillor Cullen, I hear your frustration on the Brides Head plan but we do
21 have -- the consultants have been out and engaged and met with the district staff, as
22 Brian has said. I can't comment on what happened to the previous consultants.
23 Brian might be able to give -- it was three years ago, or Michael maybe.

24 MR GLEESON: Michael maybe.

25 MS O'GORMAN: Yes, and just what happened with it. I do take your point on
26 parking and the issues with new, particularly tourist developments or those types of
27 new developments that attract a lot of visitors, we will certainly take a look at that in
28 the planning department, just see what else we can do as regards our planning and
29 our parking conditions. I would think we are probably quite generous in what we
30 allow in terms of parking in most applications, which is probably contrary to a lot of
31 more centralised policy. Because we do see the impact when the likes of Brittas Bay
32 or anytime there's a fine day, all our public amenities, there are cars parked all over
33 the place and it is an issue. So our Planning Department are very in tune with what
34 is going on.

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I might pass over then to Michael, you want to talk about Brides Head first and the Burgage as well, and then Lorraine might come in on the signs, please.

MR NICHOLSON: In relation to the Burgage, as you know the Council are major landholders. We have a very large piece of land at Burgage, Blessington. We regularly got requests from people, everything from a pool to soccer pitches to communities facilities to car parking. So we decided that rather than just piecemeal off all this piece of land, we would engage with consultants on a master plan. We procured consultants. They did a master plan. They brought several options which myself and the former chief executive presented to the Baltinglass MD. At around the same time the local area plan was starting, we felt it was prudent to wait until the local area plan was completed because this site is going to be a very, very important site in the overall local area plan and it wouldn't be prudent for us to finish the master plan on this particular site and then have it undone by local area plan after consultation. So both of those are run together. When the local area plan is finished the master plan will also be finished. That is why that hasn't been done. That's why there is a slight delay.

A similar story with regard to lands we own in Rathdrum, Brides Head and Marlton, where we have land holdings which are ideal for sport and recreational. So, again, we get constantly requests from clubs wanting to use bits of it. So again decided we would have -- we would parcel those three pieces of lands together and get one consultant to do master plans on all three of them. That is underway. It is a long slow process because there's huge consultation being done with the members, with all the clubs using it and that will happen it.

In relation to community levies, a quote was made there for 8 million from a development. Remember, there's three different types of categories of development levies, and category 3 is the one that deals with community. That is the smallest amount of money. So I wouldn't want anyone to think we are getting millions for that because we are not. The amount of money available to us is very, very small from the developers. It is the smallest of the three. So we don't have a huge cache of money waiting to spend on development plans. That is why we try and deal with developers and planning applications and get them to provide facilities for us instead

1 of us having to provide them ourselves from a very, very limited amount of funding.

2

3 So all the plans are on the way. They are slow. But by their very nature,
4 Cathaoirleach, plans are slow because there is widespread consultation, which we
5 need to do because there's hundreds of clubs around the county looking for land. So
6 they will be finished and we will keep the members updated. And, apologies, it is a
7 slow process. Thank you.

8 MS GALLAGHER: Okay. Thank you, Cathaoirleach. And yes, Councillor Doyle,
9 I am familiar with the signs that you are referring to warning people of riptides, I
10 think it is a very good idea. So the district administrator of Bray will certainly link
11 in with environment with a view to erecting information signs that you describe.

12 MR LANE: Just two questions. The park and ride. First of all, the bus stop at
13 Hollywood has gone through public consultation and it will be up for the meeting on
14 the 27th May. As regards the park and ride itself -- sorry that was the bus stop. The
15 park and ride, the district engineer has met with landowners last week and there is a
16 follow up meeting this week. There is an indicative layout which is currently being
17 discussed by them.

18

19 As regards public lighting in general, the emphasis currently is on the replacement of
20 the older lights, the existing lights with the new LEDs. I am not aware currently of
21 funding or a schemes for new public lights. We will look at that when we have this
22 currently paid for and accounted in the budget and see what monies are available.

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks, Joe. Councillor Miriam Murphy.

24 COUNCILLOR MURPHY: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Just a few things I would like
25 to bring up. First of all, I wish Breege every happiness in her retirement. I know I
26 didn't work with you on committees or anything but you were always so supportive
27 to me and sent lovely messages when I was cathaoirleach in the last three terms, and
28 your friendship is very much valued. I hope you get many years of sunshine in your
29 retirement.

30

31 Just a few issues I would like to highlight as well. First of all I would like to say on
32 the Disability Committee, that both Laura and I myself were asked to speak to the
33 executive of AILG last week, which was another notch for this Committee to be
34 invited here and that was because of the conference being held recently in Arklow,

1 and it was actually very apt because they are wanting disability policies included in
2 their organisation. I think that is another fantastic acknowledgment of where we are
3 today. As a lot of people have said, this is our last meeting and if I don't return I
4 hope that somebody will take up the leash of chasing Michael and the Committee's
5 people involved. I would like to -- it has been music to my ears, I suppose, in the
6 last term to hear other councillors bringing up disability issues in their
7 constituencies. I think that is acknowledgment enough for me to say a job well done.

8
9 On the international integration I feel very strongly that we as councillors are not
10 contacting our MEPs who will be going around looking for votes just as we are
11 locally on the ground here. These are the people who are making these decisions
12 about our country and about our local people who are being not looked after, in my
13 view, in the way that they should be. We are knocking on our local authority doors
14 looking for housing, and I don't have to explain the stories that we have been told,
15 and I feel that we as councillors don't have a voice locally to house or local people. I
16 know everyone is entitled to a roof over our head, I can understand that, but the
17 frustration is getting so bad. It is just so bad and so sad. I think as a councillor we
18 are not let do our job properly. We are the ones that are getting it at the door at this
19 moment in time and for me I am speechless. What can I say? I have no belief. I just
20 have no belief going forward. And if I don't get back in, I will say that is one thing
21 that I will be very disappointed about, that I have not been able to do my job for my
22 local people in my local town and in my local district. And I would like to wish,
23 Aoife, every success in the next venture you make in politics. You are a great
24 chairperson. So thank you.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Councillor John Snell.

26 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. First off I would just like to say to
27 Breege Kilkenny that it has been a pleasure to know Breege over the last 15 years
28 and to work with her. She has been an excellent colleague. Breege spent many,
29 many years in housing and I suppose a lot has been mentioned about the west of the
30 county and what she's done for the people of West Wicklow, but truthfully there's
31 people north, east, south and west who have benefited from the hard work of Breege
32 Kilkenny in the housing section. There's a lot of our own staff, whether they are
33 outdoor staff, engineers who all worked underneath Breege who are the better for
34 that. I think she left housing in a very, very good place. I want to thank Breege for

1 that.

2

3 In regards your promotion, it was worthy. It certainly was. Because for all the hard
4 work that you've done over the years. And I think you will also have left, whether it
5 be biodiversity, climate change and planning, in a far healthier position as well for
6 having you involved of it. There's no saying that you're only a number in any job,
7 and that's true of each and everyone of us. But isn't it lovely when you have
8 somebody who has the skill set, the passion and the love for the job and to be able to
9 see out to retirement.

10 First and foremost, Breege, you're a wife and mother, I would like to say that I think
11 it's time you spent the rest of your time with your family and I wish you really, really
12 well for the future and enjoy every minute of it and we will see you on your
13 retirement night.

14

15 I was going to say I was enjoying the debate in here today. I don't normally. I know
16 it's getting to election time and it's probably like reading people's manifestos, but
17 they are entitled to ask the questions and I really enjoyed the questions that have
18 been asked today. And indeed the answers that's coming back from the top table.
19 Certainly for Emer, your short time here, I have always found that your door has
20 always been open. You've implemented that from day one. So not only you, but
21 your senior officials around you. So I wasn't going to ask any questions today
22 because I would like to avail of, if I need to ask anything over the coming weeks that
23 I would drop in and see you because you've always been courteous to each and every
24 one of the 32 members. And I was going to leave it at that. But I have to commend
25 Councillor Shay Cullen for having the courage to speak up against his own political
26 party on this failed migration plan, and I have to say that it was brave of him to speak
27 out here today. Unfortunately, a lot of what he's talking about cannot be solved at
28 County Council level and we have seen that. This is national, national policy
29 supported by all political parties in opposition and in government. And the reality is
30 we deal with the fallout here. I honestly thought that the straw that broke the camel's
31 back was when they were proposing to put 950 people into the bog field in Annamoe
32 in tented accommodation. I didn't think things could get any worse. But
33 unfortunately they have because tented accommodation seems to be the only thing
34 that's being proposed now for this county. And our figures in regards us stepping up

1 to the plate has been exemplary in County Wicklow, whether it is people fleeing the
2 war in Ukraine or anywhere else. The figures are there. We are doing more than
3 most counties. And indeed members of this County Council have not been found
4 wanting in supporting and helping people who are in desperate need and have a
5 genuine need to live outside of their own country.

6
7 Unfortunately, I did state that there are people out there who are making a lot of
8 money out of this. We see, you know, the person who was looking to implement the
9 950 in Annamoe, Brian McDermott, who also runs facilities in Punchestown, in
10 Stradbally, Lawless Hotel in Aughrim. They're also connected to companies which
11 have facilities in East Wall, Manor Kilbride in West Wicklow there. Is a lot of stuff
12 going on behind the scenes and I understand people possibly don't feel comfortable
13 speaking about it, but I certainly do. The only thing I would say that we can do here
14 in this Council is implement an enforcement action. When people go out and build
15 30 concrete houses without planning permission in Kippure Lodge in West Wicklow
16 without any planning permission and they ignore the officials of this Council when
17 they write to them to state that you're ignoring the planning laws that we all have to
18 obey by, I think it's an awful slap in the face for us as a local authority and it sends
19 out the wrong signal. We spent two and a half years going through a county
20 development plan and a lot of the councillors would have been new to it. We have
21 seen where the Minister come back and he actually slapped our wrist on a couple of
22 occasions in regards to small one-off sites throughout the county, north, east, south
23 and west, and I think there was only a half a dozen. But yet, big multinationals can
24 come in and build 30 houses and keep ignoring, keep ignoring the notices that they're
25 getting from Wicklow County Council to such a degree that we're irrelevant.

26
27 So they're getting a message from somewhere, whether that's from above in Dáil
28 Eireann and they're being told do as you please, allow raw sewerage run down the
29 fields and into the Blessington reservoir, because that's what's happening. The
30 photographs are there. We have copies of them. Our enforcement section have
31 copies of them. Government TDs and parties have copies of them, and nobody is
32 doing anything. I understand that in times of need people have to row together to
33 help out, but a lot of this is of our Government's own making with the support of
34 opposition. Unfortunately. So I am a public representative. I will stand with the

1 public and I will listen to them and it is my job to come in here and relay that.

2 Thanks, Cathaoirleach

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Peir Leonard.

4 COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Look it, I suppose I have to
5 come in and say I don't think there's a councillor here that isn't a good person and
6 wants to help everybody in the community and I think both Councillor Snell and
7 Councillor Cullen, both of them are really good councillors and I think the whole
8 situation with the migration has been a national policy failure that has rippled down
9 and just caused so much divide in local communities. It's so upsetting when you see,
10 you know, ordinary people and candidates from different cultures as well that have
11 been settled into the community for many years, you know their posters being torn
12 up and stuff like that. And that's what happens when that hatred and divide you
13 know ripples down into local communities and I think that our national politicians
14 need to take ownership of this and protect everybody in our local communities and
15 work towards solutions rather than creating hatred and divide and situations that
16 happen. And the double standards in planning across the board with everything is
17 just not acceptable.

18

19 Then back to the Chief Executive's report and just to say thank you to Breege, and
20 thank you to all the directors for the last few years. This is my first term. And I
21 know Sorcha Walsh is always laughing at me because I always use it as an excuse
22 not to know enough about planning and stuff like that. It has been a real eye-opener.
23 I just especially want to thank Breege because she has been so kind and respectful
24 and I wish her the very best with her retirement. I hope she gets to do lots of craft
25 and hopefully we will have a really thriving craft scene in the county so that she can
26 enjoy. She has accomplished an awful lot and a lot of things that people wouldn't
27 really relate to Breege's role, but Arklow Harbour has been transformed. We have
28 beautiful new pontoons down there and the fishermen huts. You can see the
29 transformation and the sewage treatment plant now to compliment it in the
30 background. The whole scenery has just completely turned around.

31

32 I want to thank the harbour team who are part of your team there. They are a great
33 team, and also your climate team. I saw some of them all sitting up in the canteen
34 earlier and the comradery between them all, you know, you are a really good leader

1 and you bring people together to work towards solutions and that's a really good
2 model I think and I am very grateful for how respectful you have been to me for the
3 last few years.

4
5 In relation to the Chief Executive's report, I just wanted to -- I know it was touched
6 on then earlier. One of my main things is Arklow Main Street and the small
7 businesses which when I began this journey in local council, I realised that a lot of
8 the small businesses didn't have a voice at the table. They're not involved in
9 Chamber of Commerce. They are struggling, they are competing with the big firms,
10 Tescos, you know, the big supermarkets that have convenience parking and stuff like
11 that. A lot of them, the Chief Executive touched on the ICOB grant, the Increased
12 Cost of Business grant that was rolled out recently. I think it was a 257 million grant
13 of support for existing small businesses, but it is rates related. I just wanted to ask
14 how many businesses, and maybe you can come back if you don't have the
15 figures -- how many businesses applied, and I know you said the numbers were high,
16 but how many were actually eligible? How many will be actually successful?
17 Because I know there was a problem in ineligibility of small businesses that might be
18 renting off a landlord but they don't pay actually pay the rates. The landlord pays the
19 rates and they pay the landlord the rates, which excluded them from actually being
20 able to access this grant. It really had a negative affect on a lot of the business that I
21 would deal with in Arklow that weren't able to access it because of that. So maybe
22 we could get clarification on that and just support them, maybe, if there is another
23 stage of it, that we can rectify that, and whether we get them rectified for rates in
24 some way.

25
26 Then also the street enhancement fund, you know, would be a really good -- I know
27 it was mentioned there earlier as well. I think that on talking to a lot of the main
28 street traders, the Street Enhancement Fund was one of the most successful things
29 rolled out in Arklow over the last few years. A lot of the businesses don't see the
30 money that they pay in rates and where it goes and stuff like that, and a lot of them
31 were very thankful for the Street Enhancement Fund. You know, it wasn't a huge
32 fund but it was enough to be able to transform areas of the street that were derelict.
33 We are missing our town centres. Arklow is missing a town centre and we need to
34 do whatever we can, the low-hanging fruit to try and give it a bit of a facelift and

1 keep people's hope up.

2

3 The recreational side of things, I was over in Coral Leisure Centre watching the Irish
4 Open, the Arklow Racquetball Club over the weekend. I know we did a recreational
5 audit. I think the recreational audit was good but I think there was a lot of stuff
6 missing off of it. I think it would be helpful to maybe give that to the local MD and
7 the councillors to maybe have a look at it and see if we can add anything to it
8 because I think there is a lot of groups that didn't submit into it that could be captured
9 without a home.

10

11 Coral Leisure Centre is a fantastic facility, the swimming pool and campus there. It
12 is great to have all the beautiful land around it, but the whole place needs a master
13 plan. At the Irish Open, it was the 41st Irish Open and the 38th Arklow Open for
14 racquetball with people coming from all over the world, Columbia, Washington, and
15 competing. Upstairs is closed. There was no viewing platform because there's no
16 fire safety -- there was a fire safety issue there so it has been closed off. I don't think
17 it will cost a lot to look at that and maybe look and see if that is a small-term win that
18 we could rectify. I think it would be really appreciated.

19 And then investment into the courts there as well and to liaise with the local groups
20 down there to see. They had to do a lot of off-site, you know, kind of facilitation of
21 the competition. So you know if we are looking at the whole site as a whole, maybe
22 to engage with the groups that don't have a home and see can we build clubhouses
23 around the site and additional stuff.

24

25 I think that is pretty much it, just apart from the coastal protection. We have lost all
26 access to Clogga Beach. I know that the Environmental Department are looking at T
27 now that the good weather is coming in I think it is really important to look at access
28 to all of our beaches. It is a really important free amenity for the public, if we can do
29 anything to fill the gap until we get the proper surveys that are done. And just thank
30 you to all the directors and managers for being patient with me. It is kind of, I
31 probably annoy people because I'm independent. I don't have a group of advisers to
32 act in the right way or know how things work sometimes, so thanks for bearing with
33 me over the last few years. I hope to see you all again maybe in June, if we are all
34 successful. Thank you.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Councillors, I am going to
2 propose that we extend the meeting until our business is concluded. So I am just
3 looking for proposer. That's great. All agreed? (Agreed.) Great. Okay. Councillor
4 Pat Kennedy.

5 COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: First of all, Breege, thank you for all you have done
6 for this county. I think you have made a huge contribution to the county and I think
7 you have made a change to so many lives in the county, especially when you were in
8 housing and made a change to people's lives that they will never know. But I
9 suppose those of us that worked with you know the contribution that you have made.
10 So thank you, and I wish you well into the future.

11
12 Secondly, Chief Executive, I did bring it up here in February and I know you did
13 write to the ESB in relation to the outages in Aughrim. They are still ongoing and
14 there are many children still losing a lot of days from school when the school has to
15 close down because of the outages in Aughrim. Some of the business have to close
16 in Aughrim because they have no ESB, especially the post office. It does have a
17 knock-on effect for the rural community and the townspeople, especially on pension
18 day. I am wondering have you had any word back from them? I was wondering
19 about that.

20
21 One of my colleagues did mention the rain on the rural roads and the effect it is
22 having and I think I brought that up many, many times, especially at our own MD
23 meeting. The roads in south Wicklow are in a shocking state. Rural people don't ask
24 for much, but they do reserve a road to drive on. I would ask for something to be
25 done about the rural roads because they are just unacceptable, the state that they are
26 in, and I know this has been covered already.

27 I was going to bring up about the master plan for Glendalough, but Director
28 Nicholson has dealt with that so I am not going to bring that up.

29
30 I would like to acknowledge the town and village renewal money that was allocated
31 last week for three projects in Wicklow; Wicklow Town, Lacken and Glenmalure.
32 They will play a huge part in the lives of rural people and towns people going
33 forward with the investment that they are going to give to those areas and I want to
34 acknowledge the staff for that.

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The other thing I just would like to say is something that was said a second ago in relation to planning. I am very pro rural planning and I will always stand, and I do believe that rural people should be able to develop their own home on their own land and I find it hard, I find it frustrating at times, but I have never found double standards in planning to be honest, and that's my experience in that. And I do a lot on rural planning and planning in general, but I have never found double standards in planning. I want to put my own name to that. So thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Chief Executive, we'll just take those.

MS O'GORMAN: Yes. Thank you, Cathaoirleach, and thank you members. Councillor Murphy, I don't think there will be any doubt that the work that you have done on the Disability Committee won't be continued, you know, whatever the outcome of the local election is. You have left certainly a significant body of work with you. So that will be pursued with vigour by the team here. You can be rest assured about that.

Councillor Snell, in relation to Kippure and enforcement, there is live enforcement action on that. We have stepped it up a gear and Leonora might comment on that further. Because you, know you, wouldn't get away with it as a local resident, you know, building in your garden or whatever. So where planning has been breached, we will take enforcement action and it is under action. Leonora will comment further on that.

Michael will comment on Coral and the issues around that, and Breege might talk about Clogga Beach, if you don't mind as well. Councillor Kennedy, I am disappointed to say I have not had a response from ESB. I will write to them again and I will let you know if I do hearing anything on that, and your comments are welcome on the town and village monies.

In relation to the rural roads, I would agree, I don't think they are in a great state. You know, when you go over the gap or any of the more rural routes you feel it in the car. So I am committed to trying to source funding for those roads and to put a comprehensive programme of work in place, but we are limited by our resources and

1 it's a bit of a chicken and egg kind of situation. We need to drive more economic
2 activity in the county to have a bigger rate base so that we can be the masters of our
3 own destiny with regards to our own infrastructure, but it is very hard to attract a
4 business into a county where the roads are in poor repair in areas. I am very, very
5 conscious of it and we are trying to leverage what funding we can in that regard. So
6 I might pass to Michael, first of all, and Brian might come in on the increased cost of
7 business scheme as well

8 MR NICHOLSON: Thank you, Emer. In relation to the copy of the audit reports, as
9 far as I know they were all sent to each MD. I will double-check to make sure. If
10 they haven't I will send them. I thought each MD got a copy of their respective
11 report.

12

13 In relation to Seaview Avenue, your contribution, Councillor Leonard, is very, very
14 timely because the problem down there is we have the former pitch and putt course,
15 we have the century garden, the old tennis court, the running track, the mini golf site,
16 the dog park, the skate park, and all the outdoors. And we have been piecemealing,
17 picking off little sites and doing all of this without an overall plan. So headed up by
18 the district administrator we are putting together a team to look at the whole Seaview
19 Avenue area, to make sure that before we sort of start auctioning off other bits of it
20 for other things that we actually have a plan. We are particularly concerned about
21 the old pitch and putt course because there's great scope there for doing something
22 really special. You will be pleased to know and I am sure the members will be
23 consulted, we are going to do an overall plan for Seaview Avenue before we start
24 using up the rest of the land piecemeal. So your timing is very, very appropriate and
25 we will keep you posted on that.

26

27 As regards to the Coral Leisure Centre we did apply for funding under the previous
28 LSSIF. We didn't get it. We got some for Wicklow but not for Arklow. We
29 hopefully will be reapplying under this current round of LSSIF for Arklow. You're
30 right, it does need a significant amount of TLC. The courts have gone very shabby.
31 The changing area has gone very shabby. It needs more than a lick of paint. I am
32 sure we will be applying for that this year. Thank you.

33 MS O'GORMAN: Breege.

34 MS KILKENNY: Just in relation to Clogga Beach, as you know, Councillor

1 Leonard, we made applications to the OPW for funding. The only kind of little delay
2 that we have at the moment is in staff recruitment. It's just been so difficult to get
3 engineers at this point, but I think there is one coming very soon and that will be,
4 that's going to be on their top agenda, is to be dealing with coastal erosion to assist
5 Marc in relation to that. But then you also have Mark Costello who is actually
6 working in the background under the climate action plan, trying to keep things going
7 ahead until we get that staff in place. As soon as it is there, as soon as the staff
8 member is there, that is their top priority and we will be getting back to all the
9 coastal areas in Wicklow, the 60 kilometre length of coastline that we have. Okay.

10 MS O'GORMAN: Brian.

11 MR GLEESON: Just in relation to the Increased Cost of Business scheme, the
12 national average application rate was 51%. Wicklow's application rate was actually
13 just under 66%. So it was well above the national average. We received in by the
14 end of the closing date of the scheme 2,010 applications. The 66% was based on
15 possible eligible customers of 3,071. However, that didn't take account of vacant
16 premises and other rate payers who would have been in significant arrears and not on
17 payment plans, which wouldn't qualify. So we estimate that the real eligibility figure
18 would be more in line with about 2,500. So that would bring us up to about 80%,
19 which is quite positive. It would be a lot higher than, say, the Restart grant response,
20 that particular scheme. So it's quite a positive. As I said, I think it's the fifth highest
21 in the country, that particular application rate. So that in itself is positive, that the
22 Wicklow businesses have bought into the scheme.

23

24 In relation to the particular issue that Councillor Leonard raised about tenants who
25 don't pay rates directly, that might be part of their overall rent to a landlord. This
26 matter has been raised nationally. I think my team spoke to you on that, Councillor
27 Leonard. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and a steering
28 group that was set up to look at this particular scheme and look at the issues that are
29 coming out of it did examine the matter, but they decided that tenants who are not
30 registered rate payers and don't pay rates directly to a local authority are not eligible,
31 and it's to do with the legislation as well. They don't comply with section 4 of the
32 2019 Local Government Rates Act. So unfortunately that is an area that, I suppose,
33 it does fall down. We don't necessarily agree with it but the powers that be have
34 looked at it and I suppose the concern is that it doesn't adhere to the legislation. So,

1 unfortunately, there's nothing we can do in relation to that particular issue. But in
2 relation to the scheme, as the Chief Executive said, the department and the
3 government are looking at possibly re-opening the scheme again and we should have
4 word on that this week. Thank you.

5 MS EARLS: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. In relation to Kippure, the planning staff
6 have been out along with our colleagues in environment in very recent days and we
7 have instigated further enforcement proceedings and we will continue to investigate
8 it further this week.

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: That's great. Thank you. Councillor Gerry O'Neill.

10 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I am going to start by wishing
11 Breege the very best of luck and happy retirement, to yourself, John and family. I
12 have known Breege, as I said, at the municipal level for a long time, well before I
13 was even elected, before the building of the Glending and she kindly worked with
14 me. As I say, I wasn't elected at the time. She was always a person I could get on
15 very well with. She was quick enough to put me in my place on plenty of occasions
16 and put manners on me here and there and gave me kind of motherly advice at times,
17 that maybe we'll approach this at a different angle, Gerry O'Neill, and whatever. But
18 I'll tell you, she's more of a West Wicklow woman, I think, than a Cavan woman. I
19 know she has a great love for our part of the county. We've had plenty of craic with
20 Breege over the years as well as the serious stuff. I know she will be out to see
21 Paddy Gleeson in Mona Valley fairly soon again. No better woman to render a few
22 tunes here and there, Breege Kilkenny. Oh to be in Dún na Rí. No better girl,
23 Breege. But the very best of luck. You deserve a good break now and I hope you
24 and John and the family have a long and happy retirement. So the best of luck,
25 Breege.

26

27 Could I just move on with a few points there, Cathaoirleach?

28 I know some of them have been forwarded there. But I really want to express my
29 really disappointment at Councillor Cullen and his remarks. I have known Shay a
30 long time and I wish him the best of luck. I think he's leaving. He's packing it in
31 today. But I am really disappointed with his remarks there. I agree with every word
32 he said about his party or his former party, whatever it is. If I didn't have a bad mind
33 I would be inclined to think that he was getting ready as an independent candidate
34 for a general election, because I don't like innuendo of any description. I like either

1 to, you know, put up or shut up. And to class people in West Wicklow as being
2 radical right or left, anyone that would know me --

3 COUNCILLOR CULLEN: I never said that.

4 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: -- knows quite well that I am not left or right.

5 COUNCILLOR CULLEN: Misinformation again.

6 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: I work sincerely for the people of the area and I am
7 honest in my approach. I mean, for example, in Kippure, in Kilbride Hall only two
8 or three weeks ago, John was there and myself, and there was over -- there was 200
9 people in the hall concerned about it issues in the area where we have a thousand
10 refugees in the immediate area there. I couldn't say there was one person in the hall
11 that was either left or right winged, they were just ordinary people, ordinary country
12 people who are concerned about issues. So I absolutely resent any form of innuendo
13 or that type of talk about people being to the right or to the left. I certainly am not. I
14 am very, very concerned about -- I am just sad, Shay, that you did come out with that
15 on your last day. Anyway, I will move on there.

16

17 The issue in Kippure Lodge is a serious, serious issue there. You know, we know
18 there are 22 houses built there without planning. We know that the waste water
19 treatment plant is not adequate. We see it with our own eyes every day of the week.
20 And probably the scariest part of what's going on in Kippure Lodge is where the
21 works are continuing there. We could talk all day about enforcement and we can
22 talk about planning and whatever, but with aerial shots of that town, it's clear that the
23 whole, that the works are continuing. There's massive works going on there, and the
24 people of the area, the ordinary people of the Kilbride, the ordinary Joe Soap person
25 of the area, you know, in an area where there has been two planning permissions
26 being turned down by local people who are looking to build on their own land, you
27 know, it is very hard to swallow, to see this sort of contempt by this group of people.
28 You know, the same group have brought in over 42 million, and might I add, a lot of
29 those are close associates of members, of members of Fine Gael in the area.

30

31 So what is happening there, the continuous work there is not acceptable. I know that
32 the usual run-of-the-mill is -- in actual fact, we have two cases at the moment where
33 a family are told to demolish their house, just across the border in Dublin, right, 100
34 yards across the border. There's a family at the moment, a young family, three

1 young children there, and it's heartbreaking to see the father of that family
2 dismantling his house at the moment, having gone through all the courts. But my
3 understanding of all of this would be that, you know, you get a warning, you get an
4 enforcement, you get your letter there and within a month if you don't, there's
5 proceedings. So for the life of me I can't understand how proceedings haven't
6 happened in the case where 32 houses, there's a beautiful old belfry there that was
7 built in 1840 levelled to the ground, absolutely levelled. Every rule in the book has
8 been broken. And it's continuing. Every Councillor in this room here knows quite
9 well what I am talking about because I think everyone has been informed. But we're
10 all just sitting there, nothing seems to be happening about what's probably the
11 biggest planning scandal in the country to my knowledge ever. I have never seen
12 anything like it, where the roads are flat out with trucks. There's works going on and
13 on and on. It is just absolutely not acceptable.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor, we will get some clarity on that.

15 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: I would also ask, has there been any meetings with these
16 people and officials of Wicklow County Council within the last three weeks? A
17 couple of years ago, two years ago the same group who, you know, it doesn't matter
18 whether they are asked to level every house in the morning, because they've made
19 their money off the backs of the unfortunate refugees anyway. That's the way they
20 are making their money. Massive money, 42 million as I say, last year. I raised this
21 issue two years ago about a car park, an extension in Burgage where the same group,
22 the same people we're talking about, they moved in and took over two and a half
23 acres of our land, Council land in Blessington, two and a half years ago, built their
24 own car park on it. I mean is there -- there's definitely people of our area, there's a
25 rule for them and a rule for us. And this, what I am asking today is that this
26 absolutely stops. You know, we have to stop this carry on. This is not right. It's
27 wrong. I don't understand for a minute how enforcement isn't out there now to stop
28 this carry on. It is just absolutely not good enough. This is going on two years here
29 where Wicklow County Council have written to these group of people and they don't
30 reply. There's other stuff going on in the area that's absolutely unreal.

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor, we will get some clarity on that for you. I am just
32 conscious of time.

33 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Yes --

34 CATHAOIRLEACH: I am conscious of time.

1 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: -- so Cathaoirleach, can I finally plead there. I am going
2 to point out another issue there, Councillor Cronin mentioned earlier on about it 65
3 bus; the reason being really the bus is all over the place now as such, is there's
4 another 3 or 400 refugees in Cooks Lane. The 65 bus from Dublin now, my phone is
5 ringing day and night. I have been in contact with Dublin Bus this morning. That
6 being that the refugees are using the transport of 65 get into Dublin and back out
7 again. That's the Blessington bus or Ballymore bus. At the moment it's leaving
8 people behind after doing a day's work in Dublin or school children. I was talking to
9 two parents only the last two days that had to organise taxis to get their children out
10 of Dublin, out home, and that's not good. So maybe the Council would help me out
11 here in making contact with Dublin Bus to ensure that there's extra services on the
12 road.

13 CATHAOIRLEACH: I think that has been agreed already.

14 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: And my third and final point there is --

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: If members could --

16 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: In fairness I brought these questions up at the last
17 meeting.

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Go ahead, Councillor O'Neill.

19 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: The reason they weren't answered is we ran out of time.
20 Could I just point out finally there, there's huge sewerage issues in Blessington. I
21 thought there was a meeting with Irish Water this morning, there wasn't. There's
22 huge sewerage issues in the old areas of Blessington and maybe, you know, there
23 should be maybe some discussions, immediate discussions with Irish Water there on
24 that.

25

26 Could I just finally say, and this is the last one, and that is, that what's going on in
27 Kippure and other areas there with the illegal planning, it's no reflection on the great
28 planners that we have here in Wicklow County Council. They are probably under
29 more pressure and more -- I mean, they have lots of group in the long grass waiting
30 on, like Irish Water and Dublin County Council or whatever and they do a great job.
31 And I don't like hear talk being thrown out about Wicklow County Council and their
32 planners all over these issues here.

33 COUNCILLOR CULLEN: You will need a further extension.

34 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor O'Neill.

1 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Go raibh míle maith agat.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Mary Kavanagh.

3 COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: Thanks, Chair. Along with everybody else I want
4 to wish Breege the very best in your retirement. Listening to everybody, I don't think
5 I have ever come across anybody as popular as Breege has been and at this stage I
6 think we should organise a petition to bring you back. But I wish you well. It's been
7 a pleasure working with you. You have made a great contribution to Wicklow
8 County Council over the years. So thanks very much for that.

9

10 I just want to make a couple of comments. You know, it may be the last meeting for
11 a number of us sitting around these tables today. And so, I just want to say that
12 while a lot of work was done, especially in my own municipal district and it was
13 good to see it, it was good to see the Glendalough master plan started, although there
14 hasn't been wonderful progress on it to date. It was great to see that funding for the
15 pump track came through. That was originally mooted in September 2021. And,
16 you know, that's a relatively short space of time really compared to other facilities
17 that people have been crying out for for a long, long time, including a local athletics
18 club which is 40 years old and has never had a home of its own or a proper track to
19 train on.

20

21 Also, the work on the community centre has commenced down at the Assembly Hall
22 which is great to see as well. But have I to say that there have been a number of
23 disappointments as well from my point of view. One of the disappointments was the
24 lack of real progress on the coastal erosion at the Morough. Eight years ago, 2016,
25 January 2016 I wasn't a councillor at the time. I was part of a group that had a
26 meeting at the Grand Hotel which was attended by around 300 people and there were
27 loads of promises made that night. I know we're in the ECRIPP project, we're part of
28 that. And only for it I don't even know if there would be any future at all to talk for
29 the Morough. We're at year three of a ten-year plan. It's far too long. I have said it
30 before. I don't know why these things take so long. You don't have that much time
31 when it comes to climate change and coastal erosion. And while it is eight years
32 since the meeting in the Grand Hotel, we are only at year three of the ECRIPP
33 project. That means that five years have just disappeared and they could have meant
34 so much to this facility which is beloved of everybody.

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The other thing that I find hard to believe and I constantly scratch my head over it, is how we can constantly see planning permission being granted for hundreds and hundreds of houses, especially in our district, Wicklow, but in other districts as well. Planning permission being granted without anybody ever stopping to think that more houses mean more people, more people means more facilities and more amenities required, and how we're, I don't know how many years in seeing these new houses coming to fruition, everybody gets housed, that's wonderful, great news. And then what? I just find it hard to believe that there is such a gap between planning and the actual, you know, reality of living in an area such as Newtownmountkennedy or Ashford which doesn't even have a play park now, or Newtown which doesn't have anything like a school, a secondary school or even any plans for it. It beggars belief that our planning can be so off. And those have been the two big disappointments for me over the last five years: The lack of progress on the Morough and the lack of facilities being provided in these areas.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Irene Winters.

COUNCILLOR WINTERS: I want to join with many people that have wished Breege well in her retirement. I have known Breege since before I was a Councillor and I have always got on well and always found her to be a wonderful person to work with and I wish her and her family every success the in the future. Thank you.

Can I also just say, Councillor O'Neill, if you had actually listened to what Councillor Cullen said instead of jumping in with your response, you would have heard that he didn't say what you accused him of. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Councillor Dermot O'Brien.

COUNCILLOR O'BRIEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I want to joy in with shout outs for Breege. I have only known you for five years obviously, and in the climate and biodiversity SPC more than anything I would say if I was thinking of putting myself in the Chief Executive's shoes I would be freaking out about the loss of institutional knowledge that comes with staff who have been around for so long. So that is very, very apparent, that you carry that with you and hopefully there's others ready to step into the shoes.

1 I was doing a bit of reminiscing from 2019 to now and looking at a chief executive's
2 report from 2019 and comparing it to now and, again, I would say credit to Breege
3 and the team that's been around her. Things like biodiversity and climate are
4 mentioned three times more these days than they were in those days. So that whole
5 challenge of weaving in an agenda into the work of a local authority where it was
6 probably small-time before that and certainly not as resourced. Like, the work of
7 weaving something in so that it is present and has its place and serves a purpose was
8 absolutely huge and it has been great certainly for me to play a small part in that,
9 building on the SPC. So congratulations and again best of luck with the retirement.

10

11 Only one thing, Cathaoirleach, that I just wanted to, again in my reflections from
12 2019 to now. And, again, a lot of people have talked about the challenges of the
13 pace of change, the scale of change, but then there's the reality of the challenge of
14 change as well. When we talk about the numbers game that in 2019 there was 4,300
15 people on the housing list in the county and in 2024 it is 4,114. Someone might say,
16 well you haven't done much but the reality of change is that things have been done
17 but we must always pay attention and be mindful of the fact that these are moving
18 pictures and we have to give attention. There are 40 homeless children in our county
19 today according to the stats and, again, while we are working away and really giving
20 every effort to try and change the lives of people within our capacity as a local
21 authority, we must always keep our focus on that stuff and it must drive us and
22 challenge us. And I know it might be easy to pull and pluck data and use it to beat
23 whoever needs to be beaten with a stick, but I think the challenge of 32 members and
24 all the officials here, is about making sure that we do zoom in when we need to and
25 that we acknowledge the complexities, but that we're very driven towards the change
26 that's required.

27

28 The last thing I would say, it is fascinating to hear people talking about amenities
29 and sports and deficits. I almost think that a local authority maybe should be hosting
30 summits around that stuff so that all the people are in a room together and that when
31 a consultant does a piece of work and then it goes on a shelf, then maybe we could
32 be proactive in calling all the actors together and maybe plotting the actions that
33 come out of the really important work that consultants do. Thank you,
34 Cathaoirleach.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Councillor Paul O'Brien.

2 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: I will be very brief because I know it is the
3 second time I have come in. This is more to do with a point of order. I think it
4 would be remiss of me not to come in and defend and compliment Councillor Shay
5 Cullen for his contribution earlier. I am here five years this month and I probably
6 think it is one of the strongest and best contributions I have heard since I have been
7 here. I say that because it was honest in his appraisal of what's happening around
8 this, not just this county but this country.

9

10 What Councillor Cullen, if I heard him right and I think most of us did, was
11 condemning the racism out there in terms of the language, in terms of plantation,
12 vermin, whole groups of people being called rapists and paedophiles. What he was
13 doing was condemning the misinformation and disinformation that's going out there
14 and scaring innocent people. Councillor Cullen has never once posted anything on
15 social media that was false, like putting people houses up on rumours of provisional
16 IP centres going in. He hasn't travelled to other parts of the county inflaming the
17 situation. He has been a moderate in this and he has called out his own party on it.
18 Remember, there's no such thing as multiple races in this world. There's only one
19 race and that's the human race and I think we should have compassion. Of all the
20 countries in the world that are lecturing others in terms of immigration, this country
21 cannot afford to do that. I'll finish by quoting my own party founder, James
22 Connolly. He said: "Let no Irishman throw a stone at a foreigner, for he may hit his
23 own clansman." So can we have a little bit of compassion, a little respect, but more
24 important the truth in what we are explaining to our constituents because there's
25 times now where we are being told we cannot go to Newtown because of it being
26 inflamed. Even though a lot of us have worked very hard in Newtown over the last
27 number of years. So a little bit of common sense, a little bit of common decency and
28 a bit of respect for everybody including those in this chamber and beyond. Thank
29 you.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: The final word on the Chief Executive's report, Councillor
31 Mick Ryan.

32 COUNCILLOR RYAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I would like to wish Breege the
33 best. I wouldn't haven't known her that long, I am only a couple of months so it
34 could be my last speech. I would like to ask the Chief Executive about public

1 lighting. Is it true that the contractor for public lighting is finishing up, and will
2 there be tenders out for it shortly? Will they follow it up with some of these, it says
3 here "access issues with the ESB" and things like that. I see in Bray, I know of three
4 lights in one patch on the Boghall Road that are out four months. If there is a change
5 around date, like, do they give a week or two when they say they're going to fix
6 them? But it seems to me that, or is it Airtricity, I don't know what they're called
7 now. They seem to come and go as they like. If there is going to be new tender for
8 public lighting there should be a more kind of policing policy on it, because I don't
9 think they are meeting targets. Thank you.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Chief Executive.

11 MS O'GORMAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, and thank you members. Just to go
12 back to Kippure, Leonora might come back in on that. '

13

14 Your comments on the 65 bus are noted, Councillor O'Neill. A number of people
15 have raised the 65 and I will include that in our letter to the NTA about the service.

16

17 Councillor Kavanagh, yes, ECRIPP is an extremely slow process and I share your
18 frustration on the lack of progress on it. We're not the ECRIPP holder as you know.
19 Iarnród Éireann are responsible for the project and what Breege's team have been
20 trying to do since that meeting way back when, is try and make small incremental
21 changes and improvements that will supplement the project when it eventually gets
22 to the Morough. I think the rate of decline particularly along the Morough has
23 accelerated and, you know, we are making all the noises that we can to central
24 government around particular issues there. It is not isolated to Wicklow; it is
25 happening in other parts of the country as well. The rate of erosion has far
26 suppressed what anybody ever would have thought. Any time there is a big storm, as
27 you well know, more swathes of land move, are lost. I might get Joe to comment on
28 the public lighting issue that Councillor Ryan raised there, and I will go to Leonora
29 first on Kippure.

30 MS EARLS: Thank you. So just again to reiterate both the environment staff and
31 planning staff have been out on the site in recent days. An enforcement notice has
32 issued. A very short period of time has been given to the individuals who have
33 received the enforcement notice. It is being taken very seriously in the Planning
34 Department and that will inform how we go forward in relation to this matter. I

1 haven't met with any of the owners of the site or any of the developers of the site. So
2 I am not aware of any meetings that have taken place.

3

4 Councillor Kavanagh, just in relation to Glendalough master plan. Just to say that a
5 steering group has been established, it's a working group and as of last Thursday the
6 local advisory group was set up. There was a very good meeting held up in
7 Glendalough with representatives from many groups of the local community and
8 following the local elections, two members of this Council will be invited onto that
9 LA group. All the agencies that were represented at the meeting and were
10 introduced and met members of the community and were given an update on projects
11 they're currently working on, including Wicklow County Council. We will keep the
12 members informed in relation to that progress. Thank you.

13 MS O'GORMAN: Joe.

14 MR LANE: Sorry, yes. We have been informed that the public lighting, that the
15 company that are dealing with, have the contract for the public lighting are
16 withdrawing from public lighting maintenance nationwide and will be finishing on
17 July 24th. However, we will be in a position to run a tender relatively quickly. We
18 have documentation ready to go almost. And we should have something ready in the
19 very near future to get that going. Whilst it won't be seamless, there won't be a big
20 delay on it.

21 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Joe. Councillor Scott, is it on the Chief
22 Executive's report?

23 COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Yes.

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Just quickly.

25 COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Yes, I didn't really receive an answer to my question about
26 the Bolt bikes. So I had asked that it stayed in the Chief Executive's report that you
27 are awaiting contracts from your legal department for Bray and Greystones, and I
28 was just confused because we had been told, I think, that it was expressions of
29 interests gone out to tender across at our MD meeting. I was wondering which one
30 of those was correct.

31 MS GALLAGHER: I would say that's the renewal of the contract for Bray. It's up
32 in I think September. Now I know the districts are anxious to extend the scheme
33 through their districts and they're going to go out for expressions of interest for
34 tender. I imagine that's only just commenced, if it has commenced. My district

1 colleagues can correct me if I am wrong.

2 MR NICHOLSON: Chair, in relation to Greystones, we initially, when the scheme
3 was so successful in Bray, we enquired from the company about extending it to
4 Greystones and they said that there wasn't a critical mass in Greystones of sufficient
5 amount that would warrant a Bolt scheme and the suggestion was that if we joined
6 with a couple of other MDs there might be a critical mass and it might make it
7 worthwhile. Because obviously the Bray's population is much higher. So we have
8 gone out for expressions of interest to see is there anybody else who might be
9 interested in Greystones that may not require the same critical mass. That's from
10 Greystones' point of view.

11 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Item number 10 is correspondence. We have no
12 items for correspondence. So we will move on to item number 11, which is the
13 notice of motions.

14

15 Number 1, notice of motion in the name of Councillor Anne Ferris, proposer and
16 seconded by Councillor Paul O'Brien on the 23rd of February. That is now going to
17 be proposed by Councillor Paul O'Brien, seconded by Councillor John Mullen. And
18 that is to ask the Chief Executive the number of apprentices taken on in each of the
19 years 2023, 2022, 2021, 2020 and 2019, and if she will provide disaggregated
20 breakdown of their function in the local authority.

21 MS PURCELL: The response to that notice of motion, two apprentices were
22 employed in the Information Systems Department in 2019 and one accounting
23 technician apprentice was employed in finance in 2020. No apprentices were
24 employed in 2021, 2022 or 2023. Wicklow County Council have committed to
25 employing five apprentices as part of the outdoor workforce plan agreed between
26 management and unions and the HR Department is currently in discussions with
27 KWETB in this regard.

28

29 Also to note, Wicklow County Council is at final stages of the Regional Graduate
30 Recruitment Programme. We anticipate up to nine graduates will be employed over
31 ten skill set areas and this project is run in conjunction with Grad Ireland and also the
32 LGMA.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Is that okay? Perfect.

34 Number 2, notice of motion in the name of Councillor Stephen Stokes, proposes.

1 Seconded by Councillor Rory O'Connor of the 1st March 2024. That Wicklow
2 County Council erect Lyme disease information and warning signage in public parks
3 and playgrounds to advise of the dangers of Lyme disease. Such signage should also
4 outline the steps to take to minimise the risk of contracting the chronic condition."
5 MS PURCELL: The response: Lyme disease is an infection carried by infected
6 ticks. Lyme disease can affect anyone but is commonest among hill walkers, hikers,
7 campers and others whose leisure activities or work takes place in heath land, light
8 woodland and other grassy areas or brings them in contact with certain animals, for
9 example, deer and sheep. Summer and autumn is the period when most cases occur.
10 Ticks are most likely to be found in the following areas: Shady and humid woodland
11 clearings with grass, open grassland, parkland, fields and bushes. Walking paths,
12 especially those bordered by long grasses. Wooded and forested areas. Vegetation
13 close to lakes and seaside beaches. And according to the Health Protection
14 Surveillance Centre, Ireland's Specialist Service for Surveillance of Communicable
15 Diseases, it is estimated that around 200 people have a positive blood test for Lyme
16 disease each year. Wicklow County Council raises awareness of Lyme disease
17 through its website which has been updated to include links to the HPSE website and
18 will run awareness campaign during May 2024. The HPSE has produced a Lyme
19 and tick information leaflet Protecting Yourself Against Tick Bites and Lyme
20 Disease to help raise awareness of Lyme disease and promote prevention methods.
21 Given the location of the Council-owned parks and playground, it is felt that there is
22 a low risk of users contacting Lyme disease in such locations and as such, no signage
23 is required. Should the HSE decide to run a public health campaign, the Council will
24 of course liaise further with them on the matter and further information is available
25 on the HPSE website in relation to Lyme disease.

26 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Helen. Councillor Stokes.

27 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Go raibh maith agat, Cathaoirleach. I am pleased to
28 bring this motion before Wicklow County Council and I would like to thank
29 Councillor O'Connor for seconding it. This follows a similar motioned passed and
30 implemented by Kilkenny County Council which was brought by Councillor David
31 Fitzgerald, a Fianna Fáil Councillor, and I would like to thank Councillor Fitzgerald
32 for his insight and encouragement. And while I do accept that the risk to the general
33 population is low, Lyme disease is a debilitating condition for those who are struck
34 down by it and awareness is key. According to the HSE, Lyme disease is a bacterial

1 infection that can be spread to humans by infected ticks and it is usually easier to
2 treat if it is diagnosed early.

3

4 Wicklow County Council already has a section on the website which has already
5 been outlined and it refers to ramblers, campers, mountain bikers and people who
6 work and walk in forested and grassy areas who are at greatest risk of being bitten by
7 ticks and developing Lyme disease. With this motion the aspiration is to raise
8 awareness, raise further awareness of this awful disease. I would implore my
9 colleagues to support this motion because it would be particularly fitting because
10 May is Lyme disease awareness month. Thank you for that.

11 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor.

12 COUNCILLOR STOKES: So what happens now, Cathaoirleach?

13 MS PURCELL: We have given our response. The Council has given the response
14 to the notice of motion and we have said that we don't feel that it is necessary to erect
15 any signage in the areas that we have parks, and you are calling for signage to be
16 erected anyway. Take a vote.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: So we take a vote.

18 MS PURCELL: Yes. So we are voting. I will read the motion again just so that
19 everybody is clear.

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: Is there any objections to it?

21 COUNCILLOR MURPHY: I didn't hear that.

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: Is there any objection to proceeding ahead with the motion.

23 COUNCILLOR MURPHY: I had my hand up, could I comment on it?

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Yes, just hold on there, Councillor Murphy, we have other
25 people in the chamber first, sorry, then I will bring you in. Sorry, Councillor O'Brien
26 first.

27 COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Sorry, yes. I think these decision have to be
28 data informed. I would have a little fear as well that if we are putting up signs that
29 might create fear about something that the risk assessment says isn't a huge risk. So I
30 wouldn't be supporting this motion, Cathaoirleach.

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Murphy.

32 COUNCILLOR MURPHY: I would be supporting this motion very strongly. It's
33 not only a few months ago I seen RTÉ had a programme on it and it was absolutely
34 the most horrendous programme. It was so debilitating for the person and they live

1 with it forever. It would be worth investigating it. I think I would certainly like to
2 see notice boards in any forestry area and I would like to see large print involved in
3 it. I am shocked to think that the HSE are not, I suppose, you know, saying it is very
4 low percentage. But if anyone has seen the programme on the Lyme disease, it is
5 quite unbelievable to see how people can't live their lives with it, so I certainly would
6 be supporting it.

7 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Shay Cullen.

8 COUNCILLOR CULLEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I suppose I am not entirely
9 against the proposal that is being put forward by Councillor Stokes, but I think as
10 Councillor O'Brien is saying, we probably need more information in terms of, like,
11 you know where do we put these signs? Because I know mountain walks, forests,
12 you know, need to be included in that and then how many signs do you put up?
13 Where do you put them? What is the cost implications to the Council? I think it's
14 not as simple as just putting signage up, in my view. I think it probably needs maybe
15 the new Council to have a look at the whole situation and maybe get more facts
16 before we make a decision on it. That is my general consensus on it.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Rory O'Connor.

18 COUNCILLOR O'CONNOR: Thanks very much, Chair. While I did second this
19 motion, I actually do agree with what people have been saying about it being data
20 informed. I think there is solid points there about how many signs do we put up and
21 where exactly do we put them up? We don't want to do overkill and have a huge
22 cost to it. I do think it should come back to the new Council because it is very, very
23 important and we all know how life changing Lyme disease can be. So I do think
24 there's something there that can be done, but I do think as a Council we need to do it
25 right and, you know, talk to the HSE as well. See if they have any data of where
26 people when Wicklow people have got Lyme disease before, if they do have any
27 information, they do have good data overall.

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor O'Connor, just for clarity, are you suggesting then
29 that it goes to SPC? Because I might go back to Councillor Stokes and just check
30 what his views are on that?

31 COUNCILLOR O'CONNOR: Yes, I think it should go to the SPC personally. That
32 is all. Thank you.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Stokes, before I bring others in on this, what are
34 your views about sending it to the SPC for further consideration?

1 COUNCILLOR STOKES: I would like to listen to the remainder of my colleagues
2 who would like to speak first and then can I come back in on that, because I would
3 like to take an informed decision on it. Thank you.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Councillor Mary Kavanagh.

5 COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: Thanks, Chair. I think Lyme disease is a growing
6 problem. It occurs in deer ticks. As you know, Wicklow has huge preponderance of
7 deer in the county. I personally have encountered them when I brought my dogs to
8 Avondale a few of years ago. One of them came back -- he went through the long
9 grass. They cling to long grass and they look for hosts to go by such as humans or
10 animals. On this occasion it was one of my dogs and I was lucky I was able to
11 remove them. Now, it is not all tick species that are affected; they have to be
12 infected ticks not just ordinary ticks which are bad enough.

13

14 But I have a first cousin who was bitten by a tick and she is still living with the
15 consequences. It occurred over in the UK. She was out on field duty, she is an
16 archaeologist, and she was bitten and she has a lifelong condition which is very, very
17 tough to live with. I think people should be made aware of the dangers, without
18 scaring them as Councillor O'Brien has said, but making people aware that if you get
19 bitten by something, don't hang around. Get treatment ASAP. And I think maybe
20 just signage, you know, at forest walks or parklands is where you would generally
21 find deer and I think that's where you're going to run into the likelihood of finding
22 ticks. So I think even if it could be approved in principle today with more
23 information, you know, to be sought through the SPC as to what goes onto signage.
24 I think it is an important point.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Scott.

26 COUNCILLOR SCOTT: I agree with what my colleague beside me, Councillor
27 O'Brien has said. With the information in the motion at the moment I can't support
28 it. I mean relevant signs in relevant places, perhaps it might be useful but I am just
29 thinking of even the public parks and playgrounds in our own district and I would
30 imagine they are very, very low risk from what I understand about Lyme disease.
31 You are better off putting up signage warning people about the dangers of touching
32 the multitude of dog faeces that are around in conjunction to our playgrounds to be
33 honest with you, I propose are also a public health risk. So I couldn't support it as it
34 stands and I would suggest either getting further information from the HSE or

1 sending it to the appropriate SPC.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Peir Leonard.

3 COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Yes, I would support it in principle as well. But I
4 asked in the past as well for the Avoca River to have signage up on it because of the
5 pollution in it. People get into it and walk. Kids get in and think it is a clean river,
6 and people are handling boats that aren't from the area that wouldn't have knowledge,
7 and I was refused the signage going up on that. So I think a comprehensive analysis
8 of all of it.

9

10 But then also I am on the heritage forum and we discussed recently the amount of
11 signage in different places and it can look very cluttered. So I would say that if the
12 decision is made to do signage, to have a look and maybe liaise with Coillte to see if
13 we can add it onto their signage as an extra add-on and maybe use QR codes and put
14 a video with it as more of a campaign that can be linked into, to look and assess what
15 is there first. And maybe the outdoor recreational scheme, I know they're working
16 on things at the moment like apps and stuff like that, so it could probably be part of
17 that and you would reach a much wider audience. Thanks.

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Actually, it is interesting you say
19 that, Councillor. The Chief Executive just noted there that a lot of the areas would
20 be outside of our area and she had a recommended writing to Coillte on it. But we
21 will take the remainder speakers on it. Councillor John Mullen.

22 COUNCILLOR MULLEN: Yes, and again I would like to support this motion, but I
23 do think it needs to be thought out with the other stakeholders. In particular, the
24 national park NPWS, it's the elephant in the room, it's the largest national park on the
25 east coast and that is where most of the occurrences of Lyme disease that I know of
26 take place. I agree with Councillor Leonard and Councillor Cullen, we do need to
27 have a coordinated and thought-out response on this because I do think we should do
28 what Councillor Stokes has said and inform the public in a manner that's responsible.
29 And, again, knowing the hill walking area quite well, I know walkers are now very
30 much using their smart phones to get maps and get data and to get information on
31 walks. So maybe rather than signage, we could just have relevant information about
32 if you do get a tick bite how to treat it quickly and what to avoid. It is a very good
33 well-intentioned motion, but we need to realise that we are the playground of east
34 coast and we have to be sensible about it.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Patsy Glennon.

2 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Two points I'd make: One, is the motion properly
3 before us now being that the seconder of the motion has suggested go goes to the
4 SPC.

5

6 The second point is, I would be inclined to agree with Councillor O'Brien, Councillor
7 Timmins and Councillor Scott. Where do you go in terms of -- where do you stop
8 warning of dangers, like, be it dog poo or whatever? I think we need more
9 information before we would push this to conclusion. Thank you.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Derek Mitchell.

11 COUNCILLOR MITCHELL: Thank you. I would just think that we shouldn't do it
12 in all the places suggested, we would maybe pick the worst five or something. Most
13 of the playgrounds that I would think of, I think there's a very low likelihood of
14 Lyme disease. They're not full of grass, they're more hard structures. So I think
15 going to the SPC and coming up with some policy, dealing with the most likely
16 places would be a good idea. Thank you.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Stokes.

18 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I have listened carefully to
19 my colleagues' contributions and I think that moving it to the SPC would be the best
20 way forward.

21 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. We will arrange for that. Thank you.
22 Notice of motion number 3 in the name of Councillor Aoife Flynn-Kennedy and
23 Councillor Melanie Corrigan, that the Wicklow County Council in conjunction with
24 Bray Municipal District examine fully the traffic congestion issues between Bray,
25 both town centre as well as entry and exit points of the district and develop a plan to
26 deal with the long-term traffic congestion taking into consideration new
27 developments which have current planning approval and/or submitted and the future
28 development of Fassaroe lands.

29 MS PURCELL: The Bray transport study 2019 was developed to address current
30 and future transport needs in Bray and its environs. The study considered future
31 developments and set out infrastructure necessary to cater for the increased traffic
32 arising. Key objections included modal shift to bus and Dart services. Dart services
33 will double in frequency under the Dart and coastal proposed improvements.

34 Dedicated bus and cycle lanes are proposed from Bray to the city centre under the

1 BusConnects project currently under consideration with An Bord Pleanála. Many of
2 the proposals to address traffic movements to and from Bray were contingent on
3 progressing the M11/N11 improvement scheme. Regrettably, funding for this
4 scheme has not been available to progress improvements as anticipated in the Bray
5 Transport Study. Efforts continue to seek funding for improvements on the
6 M11/N11. It is proposed to undertake a new local area plan for Bray commencing in
7 2024. It may be appropriate to review elements of the Bray Transport Study in
8 conjunction with this work.

9

10 While the BusConnects and Dart improvement works may have limited impact on
11 the town centre area, a traffic modelling report has been issued and the bus priority
12 and decongestion scheme are available for consultation by members.

13 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Helen. I will just comment on this and then I will
14 invite Councillor Corrigan in.

15 The reason we are calling for this motion is because Bray is literally becoming
16 choked up with traffic. We have the largest number of developments in the county,
17 we are the largest town area and we border onto Shankill, and just at our border are
18 massive developments which are under construction. And while I appreciate that a
19 study may have been done in 2019, the town has significantly since then; Covid has
20 occurred, people are working remotely and the number of new developments and the
21 number of apartment complexes is just actually quite frightening in the town. It's
22 such an issue that the residents associations in the town have actually come together
23 and formed an alliance, something that I know myself, and the other Councillor in
24 the district warmly welcome, and it is a key issue for them.

25

26 We really, really need housing and we really need development in town but we are
27 absolutely choked with traffic and we need something.

28

29 Our other challenge is that it is not just an issue for Bray Municipal District; it
30 involves the NTA, Wicklow County Council, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County
31 Council. And we need a structure that is going to bring all those partners together to
32 have a look at the issue. So on that basis, if necessary, I would ask that it would go
33 to a vote here today and that that committee be established and that a number of local
34 councillors who are elected into the next term would sit on that as well. It is going to

1 be the key issue for the district in the next term.

2

3 Councillor Corrigan.

4 COUNCILLOR CORRIGAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I would have to concur
5 with every word you have just said. The 2019 study is completely outdated. The
6 town has progressed and developed so much in the last five years. There's also huge
7 safety issues of trying to get from one side of the town to the other, and that has been
8 raised on several occasions with us. And, as you said, all eight Councillors have met
9 with the Bray residents alliance and it is a huge concern for the residents of Bray,
10 and I also would like to see it going to a vote. Thank you.

11 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Derek Mitchell.

12 COUNCILLOR MITCHELL: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Yes, I would think that
13 this should be done fairly quickly. I would also just like to say that it is not just a
14 Bray issue, apart from the congestion on the N11, which obviously affects all the
15 east of the county, but also the bus routes from Greystones go through Bray mostly
16 down the Main Street, and we have been told by the people who run the 184 that if
17 we are to have any reliable bus service in Greystones we need better priority for
18 those buses. Also, the best public bus service from Greystones is the 84X which
19 goes on the Southern Cross Road in Bray. And all the junctions are now being
20 changed to give priority to bicycles over buses and that maybe okay in the centre of
21 Dublin which is said to be a 15-minute city, but actually Dublin is a 60-minute city,
22 it is not 15-minute city; it is very scattered and very low density. The metropolitan
23 area goes out as far as Greystones. There needs to be a proper quick way of getting
24 in a bus from Greystones to Dublin, and getting to the N11. And if there isn't a quick
25 way through Bray then the buses need to go direct from Greystones to the N11 rather
26 than get tied up in the traffic which we have been told by the bus operator, and when
27 we see it, especially at school times, it really does delay the public bus service. And
28 if we want to get people out of their cars I think buses for this distance away from
29 the centre of Dublin is the only way we're going to do it. Thank you.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Dermot O'Brien.

31 COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Just quickly, I think
32 a point well made by Councillor Mitchell around how we have to include the
33 considerations of where the traffic is coming from and where it is going and all the
34 knock-on impacts. And I don't think -- you outlined it very well. We can't

1 understate the urgency of this, because it is lingering but it is also in the present
2 moment having a very negative impact, and we can't just ignore it. I think the local
3 area plan does give us an opportunity to have that consideration formalised. And one
4 other thing I would say that I think is really critical to the success, if it is possible to
5 be successful, in this endeavour would be that we have a deliberative process that
6 includes people, that includes organised groups like the residents and businesses,
7 because there's going to be big decisions and tough decisions to be made. And I
8 think if people are around a table for those decisions then there is a collective
9 ownership of them, whether we maybe agree with them all or not. But I think a
10 deliberative process will bring us to the point where decisions are more likely to be
11 acceptable. Thanks, Cathaoirleach.

12 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. I will just come in finally
13 on this just to say that I accept the fact that a local area plan is coming, I think Bray
14 may be the last because ours is the least oldest plan, and I think it would be prudent
15 to have this study and this examined in advance of that plan so that we have some
16 data and proper information in advance of that. And I agree with you, Councillor
17 O'Brien, it's come from the community, this issue has, so they should be front and
18 centre involved in it. So I would ask that the motion stands and that we examine that
19 issue. So if there is no dissent -- is there dissent? No. Okay.

20 MS PURCELL: In the same way as the last motion, are we going to refer that to the
21 SPC?

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: No.

23 MS PURCELL: No?

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: No. The lady is not for turning. And do you know why? It is
25 just actually, honest to God, the whole town is choked. We just can't move. And it
26 is putting a bad taste on other amazing stuff that's happening in the town because
27 people are saying oh, no more housing, no more development there, or not that great
28 thing, because we're just so choked. So it is so serious that I think we need to have it
29 examined.

30 MS O'GORMAN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Look, can we take it away and look at it
31 and see if we can accelerate it?

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Absolutely.

33 MS O'GORMAN: I do, I completely understand. I have driven through Bray many
34 times and I will never dry through school hours again. Shocking. I am not being

1 flippant. It is a big metropolitan area. I am happy to take it away and come back on
2 it.

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: Perfect. Councillor Corrigan, okay?

4 COUNCILLOR CORRIGAN: Yes, thank you.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Notice of motion in the name of Councillor Miriam Murphy,
6 proposer, seconded by Councillor Stephen Stokes: "That Wicklow County Council
7 will undertake an accessibility audit in all formats on all polling stations in each
8 municipal district before June's proposed local election.

9

10 The Irish Wheelchair Association has called on the Department of Housing to ensure
11 that appropriate measures are taken to ensure that polling stations are fully accessible
12 to people with disabilities speaking to participate in upcoming elections and
13 referendums, after the National Disability Authority found that 29 buildings,
14 servicing 43 polling stations, were not accessible to wheelchair users at the last
15 general election, while other issues included the availability of easy-to-read
16 information on candidates and difficulties with the tactile voting template for the
17 visually impaired. "The onus should not be on the person with the disability to try
18 and find where they have to go that is accessible which may not be in the same
19 premises where other family members are voting."

20 MS PURCELL: The European returning officer, Ms Mary Delahanty, has
21 responsibility for the polling stations in the forthcoming elections. She has
22 confirmed that full accessibility audit has been carried out in respect of all the
23 polling stations in our polling scheme -- on our polling scheme in County Wicklow.
24 Ramps are available where required and secondary access doors and extra polling
25 booths and rooms have been identified as necessary in two stations and these will be
26 catered for in the forthcoming elections. Works are being carried out on schools and
27 community halls all the time. Ms Delahunt requests a safety report to be completed
28 and notified to her in respect of each polling station before polling.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Murphy, do you want to come in there?

30 COUNCILLOR MURPHY: Yes. Thanks, Cathaoirleach. And I know this was
31 meant to be at an earlier meeting but we didn't get through the agenda. I am
32 delighted with the report from Helen. Also I would include in that accessibility is
33 also the grounds around the venue, because sometimes it could be very big stones or
34 gravel, especially in rural areas. I know the majority probably are accessible but the

1 minute ones need to be addressed as well. And look it, it is everyone's right to have
2 a vote and it is certainly everyone's right to go vote. I know the postal vote is
3 available as well, which is great, except with the postal vote I have discovered that
4 you are charged to have to have a medical form signed by your doctor, which I think
5 is absolutely just disgraceful because your PPN number, your social welfare, let's
6 you know whether you are on disability allowance or another allowance. So it is
7 quite easy to know that you are getting a disability, and I think it is another rip-off.
8 So I would like to ask the people who brought this policy in to get that reviewed.
9 But I am delighted with the report. I am also glad that Stephen supported me on this.
10 So thank you very much.

11 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Peir Leonard.

12 COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Yes, no, I would just like to support Councillor
13 Murphy in this. I think it is really good. It is terrible to think that actually it is
14 needed, you know.

15

16 Just in addition to it, I had a recent rep after the referendum. It is just to make all
17 staff aware, and clerks, of the stations, of you know the guidelines in relation to
18 people with disabilities needing a companion. There was an instance where I think
19 somebody wasn't too familiar that the elderly person actually was entitled to have her
20 companion with her to assist her in voting, and just to make all the clerks aware of
21 that. Maybe just a refresher email or something like that. Thank you.

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Stokes.

23 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Go raibh maith agat, Cathaoirleach. I would like to
24 commend Councillor Murphy for bringing this forward. Even if transpires that all of
25 our polling stations are in good shape for disability access I certainly believe that
26 raising disability awareness is essential. And bearing in mind it is not only people in
27 wheelchairs but there could be people with less mobility or people bringing buggies
28 or people, you know, with walking sticks. So I think that it's really important that we
29 make our polling stations as accessible as possible. Thank you.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. So, Councillor Murphy,
31 you're okay with that response? Yes? Councillor Murphy?

32 COUNCILLOR MURPHY: I'm delighted.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: That's okay. Okay. Motion number 5. So notice of motion
34 in the name of Councillor Edward Timmins and seconded by Councillor Vincent

1 Blake, 28th March 2024. "We are calling on the Minister for Tourism, Catherine
2 Martin, and the Minister for Housing, Darragh O'Brien, to urgently engage with the
3 providers of short-term lets and Airbnbs throughout Ireland that are providing much
4 needed support and accommodation to enhance the tourism industry that is so vital to
5 our economy. What is required is a suspension of the mandatory registration process
6 for short-term lets until adequate consultation and clarification is put in place in
7 order to allay the fears, anxiety and misinformation that it is bringing to huge
8 uncertainty to providers of accommodation in this sector."

9 MS PURCELL: This is a matter for the elected members.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Timmins.

11 COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: Yes. Thanks, chairman. I mean, this is fairly
12 self-explanatory. I raised this issue of the great service the Airbnbs provide a
13 number of times at this meetings here. The motion is as it stands. Maybe as an
14 addendum I would ask that we write to the relevant Ministers along the wording that
15 I have proposed here. Thank you.

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Irene Winters -- sorry, Irene.
17 Councillor John Mullen.

18 COUNCILLOR MULLEN: Cathaoirleach, I completely support this motion. It is
19 something I have spoken on before here. Our Airbnb offering is very important to
20 our short-term accommodation needs in a tourist county, and it is absolutely essential
21 that we try and make this industry work for everybody, and it is something that, you
22 know, we as a Council both -- I understand the planning point of view and the
23 Department's point of view, but they are actually going to shut down the tourism
24 industry if they keep going the way they are. I completely support the motion.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Irene Winters.

26 COUNCILLOR WINTERS: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I also support this motion,
27 particularly at a time when a lot of our tourists accommodation right throughout the
28 county has been used to accommodate both asylum seekers and refugees. And for
29 the use of that accommodation for asylum seekers and refugees, many of the
30 planning rules the government brought in legislation to mean that they didn't have to
31 comply with the regular planning, so it should be very easy for the government to
32 change the legislation for planning in this instance to allow for Airbnb people to be
33 able to use their property for the tourist accommodation, as we do desperately need
34 it. There is no tourist accommodation, except the Bridge Hotel left in Wicklow

1 Town. Everything else is being used for IPAS, and we do need additional
2 accommodation. Thank you.

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Miriam Murphy.

4 COUNCILLOR MURPHY: Yes, thanks, Cathaoirleach. I think it is a vital tourist
5 attraction that we certainly need in Wicklow. I just had some of the highlights that
6 Councillor Winters has highlighted there, but I mean we're the Garden of Ireland and
7 we need promotion. And if people are wanting to come to Wicklow they have little
8 choice of hotels, only, thank God, we have the Arklow Bay here, running and
9 functioning, and we know we are very lucky in Arklow to have that facility. But
10 people bringing economic benefit to our county, we should certainly be encouraging
11 it at all angles. Thank you.

12 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Vincent Blake.

13 COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Maybe the Minister's proposals were well intended when
14 he brought this in initially because what was happening in the cities where people
15 were renting out their properties to Airbnb while we should be long-terming letting
16 of these houses. That's probably what happened at the time.

17

18 So, look it, Edward has said it there. Look it, it is a disincentive to small places,
19 small villages, where we are trying to encourage tourism in the county, and for that
20 reason he put forward the motion.

21 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. So are we all happy for a letter to be issued to both
22 Ministers on behalf us all with those? (Agreed.)

23

24 Item number 6 is a notice of motion in the name of Councillor Mary Kavanagh,
25 seconded by Councillor Peir Leonard, and supported by Councillor Joe Behan and
26 Councillor Tom Fortune. And the motion is: "Due to the very worrying increase in
27 road fatalities throughout the country, this Council demands that the Government
28 provides funding for the employment of a full-time road safety officer in every local
29 authority in the country. If passed, that this motion be sent to every local authority."

30 MS PURCELL: Rather a long response to this one, and I will circulate it after the
31 meeting.

32

33 The role of the road safety officer with Wicklow County Council has always been a
34 part-time administrative role. This differs throughout the country. Some road safety

1 officers are a technical grade. To the best of our knowledge, all road safety officers
2 are part-time with the exception of a few counties being Donegal, Mayo, Kildare and
3 the Dublin authorities, and, in fact, some counties share a road safety officer. The
4 Department recently launched a pilot scheme with four counties for the appointment
5 of a permanent road safety officer at an executive engineer grade. An announcement
6 is expected that the scheme will be rolled out to all local authorities shortly. Other
7 information in relation to the role of the road safety officer include the duties of the
8 road safety officer which include, but are not limited to, promoting and assisting in
9 the implementation of the Government strategy on road safety, Vision Zero;
10 initiating and promoting road safety campaigns and projects in collaboration with
11 relevant stakeholders to develop a culture of proactive safe road use for all users;
12 promoting and assisting the implementation of a road safety plan for County
13 Wicklow; managing the Road Safety Working Together Committee for Wicklow and
14 maintaining good working relations with An Garda Síochána and other stakeholders,
15 chairing quarterly meetings. The road safety members include representatives from
16 Wicklow County Council, the Road Safety Authority, the Gardaí and Transport
17 Infrastructure Ireland. The main objects of the Road Safety Working Together
18 Committee are to oversee the preparation of a road safety plan for County Wicklow
19 in line with the Government strategy on road safety, Vision Zero; the implementation
20 of that plan; to set measures and realise targets for road safety in accordance with the
21 road safety plan; to report annually to the SPC on the outcomes achieved from the
22 plan; to discuss road safety, priorities and communicate good practice; to enhance
23 the knowledge of all those working on the working committee; the budget-holder for
24 the annual road safety budget is a thousand euro which is held for that committee;
25 and points of contact for public schools in relation to road safety in liaising with
26 MDs in replying to queries; weighbridges - recently reached agreement with private
27 company to allow use of their weighbridge by An Garda Síochána; the school
28 warden service - work with assisting the MDs in the operation of school warden
29 services for the county; participating on interview boards for school traffic wardens;
30 presentation of road safety data plans, information to various meetings when
31 required; deliver road safety messages via media and radio, when required; manage
32 and maintaining social media on Wicklow County Council social media channels
33 and to update the website for road safety.

34 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Mary Kavanagh, do you want to come in on that at

1 all? Just press your button there, Mary, please.

2 COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: Yes, thanks, Chair, I understand that there is a
3 part-time safety officer here and I know she has been doing the job to the best of her
4 ability for the last number of years, but the statistics are creeping up and we are now
5 at a ten-year high and there's something, and it's throughout the country. So there's
6 something radically wrong with road safety policy at the moment. The message is
7 not getting out there, and there are lots and lots of contributing factors to road safety.
8 And I think the time has come that to acknowledge that we need somebody who is
9 able to deal locally within each county to -- first of all, before I just elaborate I just
10 want to mention that I got these from the Garda website and they're bang up to up
11 figures, May of 2024. So overall this year to date there have been 73 road fatalities.
12 It is a ten-year high. Thirteen pedestrians, 27 drivers, 20 passengers, nine
13 motorcycles, nine pedal cyclists. And that's the 73. Now, compared to last year
14 there has been an increase of, in 2024 there was 73 killed to date, last year to date
15 was 56. Total collisions to date this year is 68, last year 52.

16

17 So the reasons why I feel we should have a full-time safety officer are that the RSI
18 can't -- the RSA can't micromanage each county. A road safety officer can monitor
19 statistics in each area and look for causes such as dangerous bends, a need for slow
20 down measures on well-known black spots, better signage and road markings and a
21 change in speed limits, if required. These are areas that councils and the Gardaí may
22 not have the resources to constantly monitor.

23

24 Some of the other statistics that came out are that young males are more likely to be
25 involved in fatal collisions and also that three quarters of all road deaths occur on
26 rural roads. And, as somebody mentioned earlier on, we have a lot of problems with
27 our rural roads. As Councillors we are constantly being approached by concerned
28 patients worried about their children accessing schools, and whilst some measures
29 have been implemented, such as slow down signs at school times, we need to
30 educate drivers of all ages, as well as pedestrians and cyclists about taking more care
31 and reducing speeds on our roads.

32

33 Now, there was a programme carried out in Castlebar about a month ago, I think it
34 was organised by Axa Road Safety, and it was aimed at 1,600 transition year

1 students. It involved graphic photographs of crashed cars, injured drivers and
2 passengers and interviewers of survivors, including a man who was responsible for
3 the death of his best friend 30 years previously in a drink driving incident. The
4 students interviewed afterwards said it had made a deep impression on them and it
5 was certainly something they would take on board when they began driving
6 themselves.

7

8 Trucks have become a major issue on our roads since Brexit with more and more
9 large trucks and vehicles on the roads than ever before. I constantly meet them every
10 day. The larger the truck the larger the cargo, and the greater the number of clients
11 awaiting delivery of supplies. Sea journeys can be affected by bad weather, causing
12 travel delays which drivers try to make up on the other side.

13

14 So I really feel the time has come to start trying to sort this problem and we need to
15 start looking at it from a different angle. It is getting worse. It is not improving --
16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Kavanagh, I actually don't think there is any
17 dissent on it. It is really about agreeing to write to the relevant Minister on it, if you
18 are agreeable.

19 COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: That's why I am asking people to please support this
20 motion, to at least write to the Government and ask them.

21 CATHAOIRLEACH: Are people in agreement with that? (Agreed.) Yes.

22

23 Councillor Walsh and Councillor Leonard you want to come in.

24 COUNCILLOR WALSH: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. No, I was just going to come in
25 in support of the motion. This is an item that comes up regularly at Joint Policing
26 Committee meetings. We get details of road collisions and obviously, as Councillor
27 Kavanagh pointed out, we are all aware of the vast, significant increase this year, in
28 conjunction with the Garda resources and the reduction in rural policing units. So
29 what is needed is a collaborative, you know, multifaceted, coordinated approach. I
30 fully support the motion.

31

32 I think Helen did mention that there were a number of pilots, two or three pilot
33 schemes -- four, sorry -- and that maybe this is being considered anyway to be rolled
34 out nationally.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Yes. So a letter would support that initiative. Councillor
2 Leonard.

3 COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Yes. I just wanted to come in and commend
4 Councillor Kavanagh as well. I think it is really important. Because the
5 conversations, as she said -- like, having conversations with young people, but
6 penetrating their psyche -- I have a 19-year-old up to a 26-year-old, and it is just their
7 attitude. So we really need conversations and we need to penetrate that idea that
8 speeding -- I walked down the street, the Main Street, Arklow, last week in the
9 evening, and, like, I kind of wouldn't be on the street in the evening time, and the
10 speed of the cars even going down in our town centres is absolutely frightening. I
11 had, Queens University come down to study the town and the transport in it. They
12 spoke to over 50 students. Some of them had actually been hit by cars in the town
13 centre. So it is a huge problem. And I think we just need to get in there, get stuck in
14 there, have the conversations and make it local.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Perfect. That is agreed. Okay. Agreed by all.

16 COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: Can I just clarify the motion as it is written to be
17 communicated?

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Sent to the Minister, yes.

19 COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: That is great. Thank you.

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: And the other local authorities. Can I ask all the members
21 just to hold for one second, just bear with me for one minute?

22

23 As you know, this is our last meeting and we also have a number of members here
24 who this is their last meeting by choice, it might be for some of us our last meeting
25 not by choice, but I just want to acknowledge that before we conclude.

26

27 So, firstly, just in terms of my own term as Cathaoirleach, I just want to thank all of
28 you sincerely for the opportunity to be your Cathaoirleach. In particular, I would
29 like to thank the people across the community of County Wicklow that I have had
30 the opportunity to meet. I think they have had the biggest impact on me, especially
31 those who maybe are living in more rural areas who have taken the time to actually
32 bring me down, meet with me and show me the issues in their areas as someone who
33 I was told was from an urban area so may not understand everything. So I really
34 appreciate that.

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I also want to thank all of you for your courtesy and your respect during the year. We have had some very difficult topics to discuss and you have always been very kind, and to the staff in Wicklow County Council as well.

I never would have thought that I would be sitting in this chair with the chain of office and it's been absolute privilege. So my sincere thanks to all of you.

I also want to thank the six Councillors who have given of themselves and their time and their energy to the roles and many years of service, and that is Councillor Derek Mitchell, Councillor Irene Winters, Councillor Shay Cullen, Councillor Vincent Blake, Councillor Rory O'Connor and Councillor Gerry Walsh. There will be a formal reception in September to mark the service that you have all given and those of us who are seeking election who are not re-elected will also have the opportunity to attend, but I just want to note for this meeting just or sincere thanks on behalf of the Council and the people of Wicklow for the service that you have given because it does impinge on your private life. I have certainly found that from the last five years. So it is a difficult undertaking to do. So just to thank all of you for it.

And then also just to thank all of those who are running in the elections and to wish everyone the best of luck. It's different out there at the moment and I know people are feeling it. And for those candidates who are running who are not sitting here and who are looking to take seats here, I know for some of them it's been a challenging environment to canvass. And putting your neck out there and putting yourself forward is a difficult thing to do, and I think it's only when your face is up on a poster does it really sink in with you how public and the lack of privacy you have from that point on, so I think it is a really courageous thing to do. So I just wanted to take the opportunity to wish you all the very best of luck, and to the others who aren't here who are looking for seats here to wish them all the best of luck as well, and I hope everybody has a really safe campaign over the next couple of weeks. So just to note that for the minutes. And hopefully we will see everyone in July. Okay. Thank you very much, members. That concludes our meeting.

Oh, sorry, Miriam Murphy. Sorry, Miriam, didn't see you.

1 COUNCILLOR MURPHY: You can hear me.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: I can hear you.

3 COUNCILLOR MURPHY: Thank you.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: Hold on members, Councillor Murphy is still speaking.

5 Miriam Murphy is still speaking.

6 COUNCILLOR MURPHY: Sorry, Cathaoirleach. I would just like to pay tribute to
7 your contribution in the last year. I think you held your steam, absolutely steam and
8 I just admire you so much. I think you have been very calm, cool and collected in
9 very tricky situations and in some tension in the chamber on occasions, and you were
10 very professional and I sincerely wish you the very best of luck. I think you are
11 right, it is sad to see so many of our long-term Councillors retiring but they've made
12 that decision, but their knowledge and their contributions will be sorely, sorely
13 missed I think going forward. We acknowledge that we have learnt a lot from those
14 people and I wish to acknowledge their friendship and their support.

15

16 I think it is a difficult choice of career for all of us but I think the satisfaction and the
17 love of it is just in our blood. Why? I don't know. But the majority of the public are
18 very respectful. I think some of the people who are not respectable have been
19 pushed into that by central government. I don't think it is by their choice, but I think
20 it is from the top down. And I certainly wish my colleagues in Arklow Municipal
21 District and all the other districts the very best of luck in this election. It has been a
22 difficult five years, politics has changed, unfortunately not for the best, but we will
23 hopefully rise above it. And I do wish the new members who are out on the street
24 canvassing all the very best. It is not nice but you have to do it. And I would like to
25 thank the team of management who are sitting in the hot seats every day and the staff
26 in each department of the Wicklow County Council a sincere thanks for their
27 support, I am sure on behalf of all the Councillors. They have a difficult job as well.
28 But, Aoife, get up and have a glass of wine tonight. Thank you.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: If only. Thank you. Councillor Irene Winters.

30 COUNCILLOR WINTERS: Just briefly, Cathaoirleach, I realise that we're late and
31 the protocol is still to happen. I want to thank you for the year that you have done as
32 Cathaoirleach of the County Council. I think you have done a fantastic job and I
33 think you have done the county proud, and I wish you every success in the
34 forthcoming election. And to everybody in this chamber who is running again, I

1 wish you the very best of luck. It has been a privilege and honour to serve with you
2 and whoever is back here in the September we will see you then. But, Aoife, you did
3 a wonderful job. And as the outgoing Cathaoirleach in an election year you don't get
4 the usual 20 or 32 people saying how fantastic you are, but let me tell you, you are.
5 Okay.

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. (Applause.) Okay, members, that
7 concludes the meeting.

8

9

(Time noted 5.40 pm)

10

* * * *

A**ability** 83:12**able** 15:1 21:6 23:30

28:4 37:8,10

45:28 48:28 49:16

52:27,28 53:5

55:11 72:18 81:7

83:17

about 6:27 10:31

11:29 14:14,34

17:34 20:13 21:6

22:17 23:30,33

24:18 25:29 26:5

27:11,13 28:2,34

29:16

30:3,22,24,33

31:2,18,20,32

32:6,13 33:24

36:4,27

37:7,19,22,32,33

38:26 39:11 40:30

41:6

42:11,22,29,30,31

43:6,31,33 44:30

45:11 46:7

48:19,28 49:2,3

above 50:34 57:20

87:32

absolute 14:22 15:15

86:15

absolutely 16:4 18:30

19:34 20:30 25:19

31:5 59:19

60:14,20,33

61:1,3 64:15 71:7

76:1 78:6 79:13

80:28 85:18 87:16

accelerate 78:5**accelerated** 66:30**accept** 32:29 70:6

77:21

acceptable 51:24

60:4,20 77:19

accepted 34:21**access** 21:7 25:6

32:28 52:27,28

53:33 54:1 66:10

78:32 79:33

accessed 16:16**accessibility** 78:15,30

79:6

accessible

78:19,22,26 79:8

80:3

accessing 84:2**accident** 4:4 17:32**accommodate** 81:2**accommodation**

43:14 50:5,6

80:12,16,28

81:1,3,7,8,10

accomplished 51:33**accordance** 8:23,31

13:17 25:22 82:29

account 9:4,10,28,29

10:10 44:21 57:22

accounted 47:28**accounting** 8:31 12:15

32:10 68:29

accounts 8:30

12:17,21

accused 63:31**achieved** 9:15,22

25:26 82:30

achievement 6:30**acknowledge** 14:5,14

17:1,19 39:5,13

40:13 55:3,7

64:32 83:16 85:33

87:22,23

acknowledgment

48:8,13

acquisition 22:9**acres** 60:30**across** 27:12 28:28

29:12,13,14 34:12

42:21 43:18 44:11

51:23 60:6,7

62:12 68:2 86:3

action 28:23 29:7

38:11 50:21

55:26,29 57:13

actions 9:23 65:6**activists** 43:25**activities** 14:3 33:10

69:15

activity 56:9**actors** 65:5**actual** 60:5 63:17**actually** 14:7 18:12

21:27 25:11 27:3

28:34 35:8 37:4

38:2 40:29

41:26,33 42:1,15

44:6 48:7 50:28

52:23,25,26 56:27

57:12,19 63:29

71:27 73:26

75:29,30 76:29

77:33 79:21,27

80:31 84:24 85:20

86:5

adaptation 16:11

20:21

add 53:14 60:1 73:21**addendum** 80:22**addition** 14:11 79:24**additional** 8:23,24

13:7,11 18:9,14

32:9,11 53:30

81:9

additions 13:21**address** 9:17

29:4,7,21 32:25

44:20 75:10

addressed 29:31 32:8

40:1 75:3 79:9

adequate 59:26 80:14**adhere** 58:7**adjacent** 30:34**administrative** 82:8**administrator** 16:3

23:19 47:15 56:25

admire 14:26 87:17**adopt** 13:16**adopted** 13:22 33:12**advance** 77:23,24**advanced** 39:6**advantages** 32:19**adventures** 36:24

42:7

advice 25:10 58:23**advise** 69:10**advisers** 54:5**advisory** 67:13**advocating** 35:11**aerial** 59:29**affect** 52:27 69:14**affected** 26:34 27:5

72:19 84:19

affects 76:22**afford** 65:28**affordable** 24:20,30

25:24

after 8:28 9:4 10:24

17:1 30:17 36:22

38:21 41:2 42:20

46:19 48:19 61:15

78:21 79:24 82:4

afterwards 84:12**again** 10:31 11:22

12:10 15:3,33,34

16:26 19:14 22:2

28:14,27 29:10,20

30:12,13 31:16

32:17 33:1,28

35:15,20 37:13

39:16,19 40:6

41:27,32 43:3

44:29 45:3,5

46:25,26 54:6

55:34 58:10,28

59:12 61:14

64:9,16,18,19,26

67:3 70:26 73:30

74:3 78:8 88:9

against 24:19 49:32

69:27 71:17

agat 4:24 18:3 19:18

62:8 70:1 79:31

age 42:19**agencies** 67:16**agenda** 40:29 57:11

64:12 79:5

ages 84:4**ago** 4:4,20 6:18,29

12:9 17:13 20:4

25:13 29:3 30:18

39:33 40:30 41:10

42:13,16,19 45:28

55:9 59:15

60:24,28,30 62:31

71:7 72:16 84:7

agree 25:9 56:4 58:6

59:4 71:27 72:34

73:34 74:14

77:17,24

agreeable 84:26**agreeing** 36:6 84:25**agreement** 23:4 35:33

36:13 83:1 84:29

agreements 42:17**agricultural** 10:1**ahead** 26:26 42:13

57:14 61:25 70:30

aimed 84:8**air** 38:2,17**all** 5:5 6:26 7:2

8:16,19 11:8 12:2

13:32 14:20,26

15:3,5,8,14,23

16:5,14,27

17:1,31 18:32

19:21 20:33 23:5

24:4,7,23 28:7,10

29:11,26,27

30:21,25,33 31:19

33:19,21 34:5

36:27,30 37:3

38:30 39:16,20

42:6,26

44:4,13,22 45:12

46:3,13,28,30

47:8,18,31 48:3

49

allay 80:15**alleged** 27:1**alliance** 44:32 75:31

76:17

allocated 28:15 55:3**allocation** 29:29,31

34:13,16

allow 37:5 46:1 51:1

81:6 83:1

allowance 79:14**allowed** 19:31**allowing** 20:8**almost** 36:27 65:2

67:25

along 13:22 15:18

16:27 18:17 22:27

27:33 29:14 39:7

58:13 62:10 66:29

80:22

already 17:27 26:8

27:9 30:23 38:26

54:33 61:20 70:12

also 4:17 5:2,19,33

6:7,21 9:14,16

10:6,7,20

13:24,28 14:32

15:12 17:18

20:3,15,24

21:22,24 22:9

29:25 30:24

31:9,17

32:6,7,14,18

33:15 34:5

35:9,26 36:2,33

40:15,34 41:10,17

42:32 43:21 46:21

49:11 50:16,17

52:6,33 57:12

60:22 62:28 63:29

69:2,4,11 73:7,

alternative 22:26 23:1**alternatives** 40:1**although** 18:14 40:31

62:20

always 14:2,4 15:1,9

16:3 23:27 33:2

36:23 39:17 40:14

47:32 49:26,27,30

51:28 55:10 58:21

63:26 64:24,28

82:7 86:11

amazing 77:34**amenities** 17:17 19:1

20:26 42:12,20

46:3 63:13 65:1

amenity 10:1 54:1**among** 38:7 40:20

69:14

among

arrived 43:25	awareness 69:24,26,28	Assembly 62:28	become 14:25 38:8	76:26 82:9 83:11	bring 33:29 36:8
arts 20:15	70:8,16,18 79:34	Association 8:4,11	84:16	84:11 86:29	41:23 47:31 52:8
ask 11:8 17:14,30	away 4:30 16:14	30:19 78:18	becoming 75:23	87:2,4,19,30,31,3	54:19,34 55:1
19:11 28:14 32:5	27:1,3 32:26 35:8	ASAP 72:27	been 8:30	3 88:10	57:25 62:13
34:3 35:3 37:13	39:2 55:27 64:26	Aughrim 43:23 50:17	11:2,15,21,24,27	better 21:23 37:34	70:2,33 72:7 76:5
39:27 40:4 43:34	77:2 78:4,9	54:20,22,23	12:10,29 13:2,22	38:1,2 39:31	77:18 86:6
49:24,28,29 52:21	awful 21:12 50:25	Authority's 38:4	14:11,12,21,22	42:18,27 44:20	bringing 37:3 39:21
54:31 60:22 66:7	51:33 70:16	Authority 8:31	15:15,16,17,23	49:6 58:28,30	48:12 79:32
68:25 76:6 77:26	Abbeylands 7:28	11:6,34 16:3 25:1	16:22	73:5 76:25 83:28	80:1,15 81:18
79:16 80:22 84:28	According 17:7 64:26	26:33 48:20 50:25	17:16,19,25,29	between 34:8 52:7	brings 69:16
85:28	69:21 70:8	58:3 64:12,28	18:5,21	63:16 68:32 74:32	broke 50:3
asked 6:8 26:4	Act 6:12 8:24 9:27	65:2 68:27 78:21	19:7,15,29,30,33	beyond 66:2	broken 60:15
27:16,22 31:9	13:17 40:11 54:5	82:3,24	20:7,9,28,31	bicycles 76:28	brothers 5:13
39:11 40:30 48:4	58:5	Avenue 56:20,26,30	21:11,13,14,15	big 14:17 17:7 19:4	brought 23:21 28:34
49:25 60:25 67:33	Active 16:15 22:14	Avoca 73:12	22:22,29 23:18	21:6 34:12 35:6	29:10 38:29,32,33
73:12	37:32 38:5,9,15	Avondale 72:16	24:2,10,24 25:21	36:21 40:7 50:30	41:20 46:14 54:29
asking 35:7 60:32	AFS 8:26 9:26,32	Avril 2:22 4:11 15:15	26:8 29:19 32:24	52:16,17 63:20	60:1 61:23 70:4
84:27	10:24 12:26 13:22	40:10	34:7,23 35:30	66:33 67:27 77:15	72:15 79:16
aspect 15:16 37:7	Agreed 7:1,2,10,17,25	Axa 84:8	39:6,14 40:22	78:9 79:7	81:4,22
aspiration 70:15	8:1,14	B	41:6 42:7,34	bigger 42:32 43:3	budget 8:23,25
aspire 5:10	13:10,11,13,32	back 11:18,22 15:11	43:10 44:31 45:1,	56:9	9:28,31 10:25
assess 73:22	25:21 36:14 54:10	16:10 17:28	before 6:4,22	biggest 60:18 86:4	13:7,12 34:12
assessment 27:16	61:20 68:32 81:30	22:17,32 25:2	11:21,29 12:23	bike 28:26	47:28 82:32
71:3	84:29 85:23	26:11,19 27:22	14:4,23 15:18	bikers 70:13	budgetary 32:11
assist 34:28 57:11	AGM 12:31	30:18 32:10,18	16:14 26:28 28:32	bikes 28:31 67:33	buggies 80:2
79:28	Aidan 33:7,8	34:17 35:16	33:7,8 35:20 37:9	biodiversity 28:2,8	build 19:31 50:21,31
assistance 34:25,26	Aideen 15:19	36:8,16,17 37:30	43:8,24 44:18	49:12 64:2,10	53:29 59:33
assisting 82:17,20	Airbnb 80:27 81:6,23	39:11,19 40:28	56:26,30 58:19,20	bird 16:6	building 9:33 30:4
83:2	Airbnbs 80:11,20	41:12 45:16 48:27	63:3,25 64:13	birds 16:7	42:19 55:28 58:20
associated 5:17 11:8	Airtricity 66:13	49:25 50:4,28	70:2 71:24,34	bit 6:11 18:21 19:1	64:16
35:2	AILG 48:5	51:26 52:21 54:25	72:7 74:11,17	21:22,23 22:8	buildings 1:6 78:21
associates 60:2	Alison 4:11	57:15 61:13 62:13	78:16 79:2 80:27	28:27 34:15	built 19:29,31
associations 75:30	And 2:6 3:32	66:19,27 71:30	83:17 84:17 85:33	37:13,20,28 40:6	20:5,6,7 27:12
assure 42:5	4:5,9,10,11,13,17,	72:3,10,16 78:10	begin 52:14 84:13	53:7 56:8 64:8	42:25 59:25
assured 15:19 55:23	21,26,34	88:11	beginners 63:19	65:30,34 66:1	60:14,30
asylum 81:2,3	5:2,3,4,6,8,9,11,1	background 52:3	beginning 25:9,10	bite 74:6	bundled 24:18
athletics 62:24	3,14,19,20,24,29,	57:13	behalf 5:19 31:5	bites 19:29,30 46:26	burden 11:33
attached 8:25 13:18	33	backs 60:26	81:30 86:23 88:2	56:26	bus 26:33,34 27:3
attempting 32:23	6:12,15,18,19,20,	backwards 39:34	behaviour 44:7	bitten 70:14	31:18 36:11
attempts 16:11	22,26,27,29,31,33	bacon 14:30	behind 20:29 31:25	72:22,24,27	39:26,29,32 40:34
attend 44:32 86:23	7:13	bacterial 70:8	38:32 43:31 50:19	black 83:28	41:2,5 44:28,30
attended 62:33	8:18,22,24,27,28,	bad 48:24 59:6 72:20	61:15	blind 30:23	47:18,20
attending 2:6,7	32,33,34	77:34 84:19	being 7:29 8:9 9:18	blindingly 20:7	61:10,11,12,14,18
attention 38:19	9:7,11,19,22,23,2	badly 27:5	15:9 21:31,34	blood 69:23 87:26	66:21 75:6,8,19
64:24,25	8,32,33	bang 83:18	23:5,29 25:1,6	board 11:11,13	76:23,25,26,32,34
attitude 24:11 85:15	10:1,4,5,6,7,8,11,	bank 22:31	27:12,20,33 29:8	26:15,19,21 27:22	77:1
attract 45:32 56:10	16,20,25,26,29,31	banners 43:32	30:11,28 31:33	31:25,33 32:1	buses 76:26,28,33
attracting 38:14	,33	bar 32:34	32:33 34:1,15,23	51:23 84:13	77:2
attraction 81:13	11:2,7,10,11,14,1	bare 17:11	37:1 41:4 42:25	boards 37:24 44:25	bushes 69:19
auctioning 56:26	5,18,21,28,31,32	base 56:9	43:12,18,22 46:29	71:10 83:3	businesses
audience 73:25	12:1,5,10,14,	based 32:28 57:21	47:23 48:6,19	boats 73:14	41:10,13,14,17
audit 29:2,4 32:6	Annamoe 43:23	basically 27:19 43:25	50:7 51:1,18	bodies 6:22	45:6,11,17,18,19
34:2,3 53:12	50:5,16	basis 12:3 20:3 32:10	52:27 54:3	body 8:11 26:5 55:21	52:14,15,20,21,22
56:15 78:15,30	Anne 2:28 5:13 13:12	37:8 76:6	59:9,20,33	bog 50:4	,24 53:2 57:29
auditor 12:16	30:14 68:22	basketball 17:12	61:10,13 62:4	boiler 29:30,32 32:8	77:14
audits 33:32 34:4,9	Annesley 2:11,12 8:1	battle 26:14	63:10,12,22	34:14,17	busy 17:27 21:8 29:16
auld 5:29	Anseo 3:17,21,23	beaches 54:1 69:21	65:19,32,33 67:6	book 6:17,20,25,31	but 4:20 5:7,15 6:5
authorities 38:7,8	Aoife 2:32 8:6,15	bear 85:29	70:14 71:17,27	60:14	11:1,24
82:11,14 85:28	48:30 74:30	bearing 54:6 79:34	74:11 76:27 78:9	books 21:11	12:11,12,17
automatically 12:30	88:3,11	beat 64:29	belfry 60:13	booths 78:33	14:4,10,13,28
autumn 69:17	Applause 15:29 88:15	beaten 64:30	belief 14:27 48:26,27	border 60:6,7 75:25	15:9,34 16:18,32
avail 49:29	April 5:3 6:11,34	beautiful 52:1 53:19	63:19	bordered 69:20	17:9,11,22,24,29,
availability 78:23	11:23 13:20 23:34	60:13	believe 14:23	borders 18:11	31 18:13,21,26
available 33:34 34:28	24:3 28:21 32:31	because 6:7 8:3 11:31	18:12,34 19:6,9	both 10:25 17:34	19:4 20:7,9
35:21 38:7,12	34:21	13:2 16:15,18,26	20:11 28:27 45:17	18:11 21:23 41:21	21:19,23,33
41:14,15 47:2,28	Arboretum	17:17 18:10,20,29	55:11 63:9,16	46:20 48:4	22:10,11,27,32
69:33 75:12,20	18:9,12,13,15,20	20:3,22	79:33	51:13,14 67:3	23:6,11 24:28
78:32 79:11	21:4,22,24 42:29	21:6,13,19 23:7	beloved 15:14 63:7	74:33 80:30	25:3,11,18,29,34
average 57:19,20	Ark 8:4,11	24:24 26:3,28	bends 83:27	81:2,29	26:2,9,20,22,24
avoid 23:4 74:6	Arklow 7:29,31 16:22	27:17 29:21	beneficial 41:17	bought 57:29	27:3,21 28:28
await 32:1	20:24 22:2 48:6	30:23,33 31:12,25	benefit 81:18	box 16:6	29:10,13
awaiting 23:11 28:29	51:34 52:13,28	36:34 37:2,20	benefited 49:4	brave 49:33	30:27,29,30
35:25 41:32 67:34	53:2,6,11,20	41:5,11 43:1	benefits 33:29 36:28	breached 55:28	31:12,20
84:19	57:1,2 81:16,17	44:4,20,34	beside 72:34	bread 29:11	32:12,18,19,23,28
awards 5:20	85:16 87:29	46:2,17,29	best 14:18 15:3,9,24	break 32:3 38:22	33:1
aware 34:5 38:14	Art 7:13	47:2,9,10 48:6,7	16:5 21:28 23:28	8:30	butter 29:11
43:13 47:26 67:9	Arup 30:9	49:10,29,30 50:6	28:7 29:25,27	breakdown 9:11	button 83:9
72:25,26 79:25,28	Arups 35:5,13	51:2,28,30	35:1,21 42:6	68:27	buy 16:27 26:14
85:1	Ashford 5:23 17:23	52:24,28 53:15,22	51:31 58:18,30,31	brief 26:27 65:9	45:11
	21:1 42:21 63:18	54:4,22,23,32	59:3 62:11 64:16	briefly 23:33 88:5	buyers 26:13
		55:2	65:13 66:6 74:27		buying 22:34

Ballinacor 5:4,14	,32 62:11,12	capable 19:32	challenge	clubs 20:15 41:29	committed 21:12 56:6
Ballinalea 17:23,27	63:25 64:1,9 66:5	capacity 41:1,4 64:27	64:12,20,29,30	46:26,30 47:10	68:31
21:1,23	Brendan 7:30	capital 8:24,28	76:3	cluttered 73:19	committees 47:32
Ballymore 61:14	Brexit 84:16	9:10,28	challenges 8:33 9:1	coast 11:8,9,11,13	common 65:34
Ballyronan 21:27	Brian 8:25 10:27,29	10:6,8,9,10,14,19,	19:5 64:19	12:9,23,26 13:1	commonest 69:14
Ballywaltrim 20:31	11:18	21,26 13:12 21:12	challenging 86:32	19:2 73:33 74:8	communal 34:20
Baltinglass 4:3,17	12:1,6,10,12	captured 53:15	chamber 52:16 66:1	coastal 30:8 32:14	communicate 82:30
14:16 15:14	17:15 23:14,22	car 4:4 18:16 29:16	70:33 87:18 88:9	53:32 57:11,16	communicated 85:25
23:24,34 46:15	42:14 45:27,28	33:13 39:34 46:12	chambers 38:28	62:31 63:4 75:7	communication 24:9
Bay 46:3 81:16	50:16 56:13 57:17	56:6 60:28,31	chance 17:23 43:29	coastline 57:16	communities
BARRY 2:13,14	Brides 23:17 42:13	care 84:4	change 16:12	codes 73:21	16:22,27 33:29
Beach 30:11 32:14	45:25 46:7,24	career 87:25	38:16,17,18 49:12	collaboration 82:19	38:16 44:4,11
34:32	Bridge 27:12	carefully 74:26	54:14,15 63:4	collaborative 85:3	46:12 51:16,20,21
35:6,8,12,15	30:18,22,27,28	cargo 84:18	64:20,21,23,27,32	colleague 5:33,34	community
53:33 55:33 57:7	31:1 32:28 35:24	carried 29:2 31:11	66:12 81:6 83:29	16:1 40:22 49:1	4:31,32,33 5:14
Behan 2:15,16 8:12	36:33 37:2,7,9	69:13 78:30,34	changed 11:25 76:28	72:34	11:31 14:30
10:28,29 12:33,34	81:8	84:7	87:31	colleagues 11:30	28:14,20 32:5,14
13:4 24:6,7 30:16	Brittany 5:12	carry 31:6 60:33 61:1	changer 16:28	14:15 15:22 21:5	33:19 34:7
31:23 35:24	Brittans 46:2	64:5	changes 22:3 66:28	28:34 36:20	46:32,34 51:13,18
36:1,9,17 39:2,27	Burgage 41:33 45:23	cars 17:26 18:17 20:3	changing 57:4 71:31	38:7,26 54:28	54:24 62:28
81:33	46:8,9,10 60:28	21:8 27:2	channels 83:7	58:13 68:8 70:17	67:14,17 77:25
Bites 69:27	Burnaby 28:16	30:28,29 37:2,3,5	character 5:28,29	72:9 74:27 87:29	79:1 86:3
Blacklion 29:15	BusConnects 75:9,18	46:3 77:2 84:9	characteristics 5:10	collected 87:17	companies 11:7 12:24
Blaise 12:30	Business 6:7 16:10	85:18,20	charged 79:12	collection	50:17
Blake's 5:18	45:10,13 52:19,27	case 11:23,29 12:25	chasing 48:10	9:14,15,16,17,19,	companion 79:26,28
Blake 2:17,18 4:15,16	54:9,22 56:11,14	13:27 26:2,11,22	check 56:16 72:3	20	company 11:15 12:12
13:10 80:9	57:18	28:13 31:33 35:25	checked 11:12	collections 6:21	28:31 67:22 68:10
81:20,21 86:20	Byrne 15:18	60:13	chicken 56:8	collective 77:16	83:1
Blessington 15:20	C	cases 60:5 69:17	chiefexecutive 44:20	collisions 83:23,33	compared 62:23
16:24 39:6,31	cache 47:3	cash 32:10 45:16	children 5:12 54:21	84:34	83:21
41:2,29 46:10	cages 43:33	categories 46:33	60:8 61:15,16	colour 45:12	comparing 64:9
51:2 60:30	call 2:10 8:17 30:20	category 46:34	64:25 84:2	come 12:23 20:24,33	compassion 38:29
61:14,27,29	43:22 44:5	cater 75:5	choice 81:16 85:32,33	21:10,27 23:9,20	65:26,30
Boghall 25:13 66:11	called 65:19,24 66:13	catered 78:34	87:25,28	24:13 26:11 30:12	competing 53:22
Bolt 28:25,31	78:18	caused 16:12 43:25	choked 75:24 76:1	31:17 32:6,12,14	competition 53:28
35:29,31,34	calling 44:6 65:5	51:16	77:33 78:2	34:6 35:5	competitor 5:7
36:26,29 67:33	70:23 75:23 80:9	causes 83:27	chronic 69:11	36:2,17,24 37:9	complete 21:13,14
68:12	calls 17:27	causing 29:22 84:20	circulate 82:4	39:11,33 44:15,21	completed 11:24
Bolts 22:14 28:26	calm 87:17	celebrate 15:26	circulated	46:8 50:28,31	16:24 46:17 79:1
Bord 16:24	came 5:2 6:22 12:9	27:8,25	7:7,15,23,33	51:8,12 52:21	completely 11:33
25:28,33,34	22:16 25:13 27:15	celebrating 6:9 24:34	circumstances 4:17	56:13 59:21 62:12	24:27 52:3 76:13
26:18,20	62:22 72:16 83:32	25:27 27:25	cities 81:22	65:6,10,11	78:7 80:26,32
27:10,16,18,22	camel's 50:4	celebration 30:16	city 24:22,24,27 75:8	66:14,19 71:30	completing 52:16
31:6,9 75:9	campaign 69:26,32	central 20:2 21:17	76:29,30	72:10 75:30	completion 33:20
Bourke 2:19 8:17	73:22 87:4	32:9 38:6 41:24	claim 34:15	77:20,25 78:9	complexes 75:29
Bray's 68:14	campaigns 82:18	66:30 87:28	clansman 65:30	79:3 81:15	complexities 64:32
Bray 4:25 8:10,11	campers 69:15 70:13	centralised 46:2	clarification 13:2	83:8,16	compliance 12:5
12:29 18:27,32	campus 53:18	centre 19:10,11 37:4	28:27 30:5 52:29	84:22,31,32	complement 23:28
20:31 22:12,26,31	can't 12:17 14:10 23:7	53:6,10,18 56:34	80:14	85:11,19	52:2 65:11
24:20 25:14	33:33 36:7 43:6	62:28 69:22 74:33	clarify 34:11 85:24	comes 17:12 24:3	compliments 24:14
27:9,12,14	45:27 60:12 71:13	75:8,19 76:28	72:2	30:33 31:32 40:17	comply 58:4 81:5
28:26,30 30:20,34	73:1 77:8,10,33	77:3,26 85:21	clarity 60:21 61:4	41:16,26,31 63:4	comprehensive 14:3
35:24,31,33	83:26	centres 53:6 65:23	72:2	64:4 84:33	16:33 56:7 73:15
36:26,28	can 6:6,18,21 7:34	85:18	class 59:8	comfortable 50:19	comprised 7:28 8:9
37:14,22,33	8:11,27 10:24	century 56:22	clean 73:13	coming 14:21 17:24	comradery 57:8
38:6,9,11 47:15	11:8,18 12:1 13:1	certain 23:20 43:22	cleaning 10:32	21:17,32 28:31	concentrate 40:8
66:10 67:34	16:16 17:1,14	69:16	clear 25:19 29:16,19	29:18,31 37:13	concentrating 16:23
68:4,10 74:32,33	18:6,19,29 20:21	certainly 6:16 11:9	43:12 45:2 59:29	38:34 39:30 41:2	concern 29:22 36:10
75:3,4,8,10,12,14,	21:25,26,28 22:31	17:14 18:34	70:27	42:26 45:18	58:7 76:17
15,23	23:4,12,28 24:7	19:8,9 20:22,29	clearings 69:19	49:25,29 53:21,34	concerned 20:2 37:7
76:3,17,18,22,23,	26:2,23,24 27:25	21:5 23:29	clearly 31:34	57:10 58:2 63:15	56:27 59:16,19,21
27,33 77:22 78:7	30:6	24:9,27,31	clerks 79:25,28	74:23 77:7,21	84:1
Breege's 39:4 51:34	33:1,3,10,14,15	30:17,30 31:18	clients 84:19	commence 6:4	concerning 44:5
66:26	34:34	33:22 36:34 37:6	cliff 18:24,27,30	commenced 2:1 23:16	concerns 25:29 26:21
Breege	36:3,8,15,17	40:17,19	22:7,13,27,28,32	62:28 68:7	29:15 30:22
14:6,8,11,18,19	37:20,34	45:2,8,13,20,32	23:7	commencing	conclude 85:33
15:30,34 17:1	38:11,12,15,18	47:16 49:10,26	climate 11:31 16:12	7:6,14,23 75:14	concluded 54:9
18:4 19:22 23:24	42:5,24 44:13	50:20 55:21 59:20	27:32,33 28:2,8	commend 49:31	concludes 87:6 88:16
24:8,14	45:8,12,19,33	64:13,15 71:9,13	49:12 52:6 57:13	79:32 85:11	conclusion 74:17
27:32,33,34 28:7	48:23,26 50:20,30	79:10,33 81:13,18	63:4 64:1,10	comment 12:1,7,11	concrete 50:22
29:25,26 32:13	51:33 52:1,2	84:13 86:25 87:29	cling 72:17	19:25 21:2 26:28	concur 76:12
36:20,22 38:26,27	candidate 59:7	cetera 22:28 33:25	close 18:22 20:27	31:17,20,32	condemning 65:18,20
39:21	candidates 51:17	chain 86:14	33:14 54:22 60:2	32:3,17 44:25	condition
40:7,12,13,16,18,	78:24 86:30	chair 11:11 27:32	69:21	45:27 55:26,29,32	25:17,22,28,30,32
22,24 42:6 47:31	cannot 15:13 41:1	62:10 68:9 71:26	closed 28:21 39:28	66:34 70:31 75:21	,34 26:9,15,26
48:34	43:15 49:34	72:13 83:10 86:14	53:22,23	comments 23:21 56:1	69:12 70:7 72:24
49:1,4,6,7,17	65:28,32	chairing 82:23	closely 14:22 43:3	62:17 66:21	conditioning 43:3
51:26,30 54:12	canteen 52:6	chairman 4:2 12:32	closing 33:27 57:21	commercial 9:14	conditions 45:34
55:32 57:6	canvass 86:32	23:23,24 80:19	club 15:27 17:12	commit 19:12	condolences
58:18,19,27,29,30	canvassing 29:10	chairperson 2:33	19:15 27:12 53:11	commitment 45:19	4:8,10,11,13,25,3
	87:33	11:14 48:31	62:25	commitments 10:11	3 5:27
			clubhouses 53:29		

conference 48:6	convenience 52:17	30:19,23,30 31:5	14:1,13,24	,24,28,29	deeply 26:10
confident 34:18	conversations	37:6 56:22	15:22,31	5:11,16,17,21,22,	deer 69:17
confirm 6:33	85:13,15,22	courteous 49:30	16:10,11,32 17:5	26,27,31	72:14,15,29
confirmation 23:11	convictions 27:18	courtesy 14:32 23:26	19:25 20:17	7:1,8,9,10,16,24,3	defend 26:6,14 65:11
25:20	cool 87:17	86:10	24:17,18 26:27	4 8:1,4,6	defending 44:7
confirmed 78:30	coordinated 74:1 85:3	courthouse 6:10,18	27:30 28:12,16,29	CPO 20:9 21:13	defer 20:19
confirming 25:21	copies 51:3,4	courts 11:21 12:3	29:24 31:12,15	22:10,24 23:1,3,4	deficiencies 29:5
confused 36:33 68:1	copy 8:25 13:17 36:3	53:26 57:3 60:9	33:8 37:26 38:21	Croatian 4:12	deficit 9:6,7
confusion 29:18	56:15,17	cousin 72:22	44:15 46:15 51:26	Cronin 2:22,23	deficits 10:10 65:2
congestion 37:3	corner 6:26	cover 10:12	52:12,18 54:19	40:10,11 45:5	definitely 60:31
74:32,34 76:22	corporate 25:25 26:5	covered 54:33	55:16 58:9 64:3,8	61:9	definition 15:3
congratulations 64:16	correct 36:5 68:3,8	craft 51:32	66:3,7,17	Cross 39:32 76:27	degree 50:32
conjunction 69:4 73:6	correlation 34:8	craic 58:27	67:28,33 68:25	Cullen 2:24,25	delay 46:22 57:9
74:31 75:16 85:2	correspond 44:31	crashed 84:9	73:27	4:28,29 5:28	67:27 77:1
connected 23:30	45:2	create 19:17 44:13	Clermont 7:21	7:1,16 36:12,13	delays 84:20
50:17	correspondence 41:7	71:3	Clogga 53:33 55:33	42:3,4	deliberative 77:13,18
conscious 56:12	68:18,19	created 43:18 44:2	57:7	43:27,28,30 45:25	delight 28:1
61:5,7	cost 11:31 25:24	creating 43:2 44:3,11	Code 8:31	49:32 51:14	delighted 16:7 31:5
consensus 71:24	45:13 52:19 53:24	51:22	Cohen 5:13	59:2,10,12 62:6	36:30 79:6,17
consequences 72:23	56:13 57:18	credit 42:7 64:9	Coillte 73:20,28	63:30 65:12,17,21	80:6
consider 7:4,12,19,27	71:21,30	creeping 83:12	Columbia 53:21	71:15,16 73:34	deliver 83:5
8:8 13:34 15:14	costs 8:34 11:34 12:2	criteria 12:26	Commerce 52:16	86:19	deliverables 9:23
consideration 72:8	22:15 24:25	critical 68:11,13,16	Committee's 48:10	Curley 5:23	delivery 84:19
74:34 75:9 77:11	32:21,22,26,28	77:12	Committee 28:2	Curren 42:13	demand 18:15 20:32
considerations 77:7	could 5:9,10,27 6:16	crossed 5:7	35:2,11 48:4,5	D	34:23 41:1,31
considered 22:16 45:8	11:3 18:3,22	crossword 15:1	55:20 76:7	danger 30:25	demanding 14:25
75:4 85:7	20:11 22:17,27	cry 38:6	82:21,26,31,33	dangerous 83:27	demands 82:1
constantly 46:26	25:3 36:29	crying 62:24	84:34	dangers 69:10 72:25	democracy 39:20
63:9,10 83:30	37:22,23 38:22	culture 82:19	Communicable 69:23	73:5 74:16	democratically 6:14
84:1,17	50:5 52:29	cultures 51:17	Connolly 65:29	dark 41:25	demolish 60:6
constituencies 48:13	53:15,25 58:21,34	cup 30:20	Cook's 61:11	data 64:29 71:2,27,33	demonstrated 35:13
constituents 14:27	59:28 61:22,27,33	current 12:6 15:24	Coolkenna 4:21	72:1 74:4 77:24	demonstrates 45:2
65:31	63:6 65:5 66:7	20:2 29:32 33:22	Coral 53:10,18 55:32	83:4	denied 25:6
construction 75:26	70:31 72:30 73:24	41:1 57:2 75:1,3	56:34	date 11:12 22:19 24:2	densities 32:26
consultant 22:12	74:5 79:7 80:1	currently 22:4 32:21	Costello 30:10 57:12	32:24 33:27 43:10	density 32:26 76:30
46:28 65:4	couldn't 6:30 25:11	35:3,17 41:3	Council's 9:1 35:10	57:21 62:21 66:12	denying 26:13
consultants 23:18	31:1 36:29 59:17	47:22,25,26,28	Council 1:3 4:18,21	83:19,22,23	depart 44:9
42:15,16 45:26,27	73:7	67:18 68:33 75:9	6:10,14,19,22,34	daughter 4:10,34	department 11:30
46:13,14 65:6	councils 41:15 83:29	currents 37:16,19	8:30,33 10:33	daughters 4:11	29:31 32:8,23
consultation 46:20,29	counties 45:10,15	curtail 43:16	11:33	day's 61:15	34:13,16,18
47:9,19 75:20	50:10 82:10,11,12	customers 57:22	12:5,29,30,31,32	day 14:8 15:19 16:17	45:14,33 46:4
80:14	countries 33:30 65:27	cycle 19:26 20:1 21:16	13:16	31:3 35:13 36:21	53:33 57:34 58:9
consultations 16:23	country 25:26 26:23	32:11 37:34 38:15	14:3,7,16,29 15:9	38:28,30,32 39:19	67:7,34 68:29,33
consulted 56:30	43:14,15,18,34	75:8	16:12 18:19,22,26	42:19 43:7,14	78:18 82:12 88:1
contact 2:8 17:29	45:16 48:19 50:12	cyclists 30:29 38:1	19:3,6,9,11,17,32	46:3 49:27 54:25	depends 21:26 33:14
35:3 36:27 40:33	57:28 59:18 60:18	83:21 84:4	20:10 22:18	59:22,26,28 61:12	derelict 53:5
61:12,18 69:16	65:15,27 66:32	Calum 4:26	24:21,23,24,27	84:18 87:34	describe 47:17
82:33	82:1,3,8 83:13	Caoimhe 7:21	25:4,7,8,15,26	days 11:9 16:17,18	description 59:7
contacted 32:33	county 1:3,6 4:21 5:2	Carlisle 31:2	26:2,4,6 27:10,25	54:21 58:13 61:16	desert 38:27
41:13	6:10,13,14,19,22,	Carlow 7:5	29:1 30:32	64:11 67:4	deserve 42:9 58:30
contacting 41:7 48:17	34	Castlebar 84:7	31:10,25,26 32:3	deal 12:2 20:8 27:22	design 22:13
69:30	7:5,13,20,21,22,2	Cathal's 4:19	34:34 36:9	28:5 32:18,27	desire 44:30
contempt 59:34	8,29,30,31	Cathal 4:17 5:18	40:30,33	37:12 47:4 50:3	desperate 50:11
contingent 10:30	8:10,11,30 10:33	Catherine 6:8,9,27	41:6,10,23,24	52:28 74:34 83:17	desperately 81:7
12:2,7,14,18	11:10,33	80:10	Councillors 6:19	dealing 17:12 19:32	despite 9:1 15:1
75:10	12:29,30,31 13:16	Catholic 6:20	15:14 16:1 20:5,6	57:11 67:22 74:23	destiny 56:10
continue 9:7 15:19	14:7,15 16:2,12	Cavan 58:25	23:30 24:10 27:8	deals 46:34	detailed 25:8 31:30
23:1 28:7 35:33	18:4,19,21 19:16	CATHAOIRLEACH 2:3	36:34 38:31	dealt 55:1	32:2,12
36:26,31 40:24,25	20:28 24:5,21	4:1,6,7,15,23,24,2	39:18,23 40:18,20	death 5:3 84:11	details 33:24 84:34
43:15 44:34 58:14	26:6,22,29 28:28	8,29	41:34 48:12,16,22	deaths 83:33	determination 31:7
75:13	29:13 30:32	5:16,17,21,22,26,	50:27 51:14 53:14	debate 49:22	detriment 20:23
continued 16:16	31:10,21,28 36:9	30,31	54:8 76:8,16 84:1	debilitating 70:7 71:8	develop 55:11 74:33
55:20	39:22 40:9 41:15	6:1,4,9,27,29 7:9	86:17 87:20 88:2	debt 9:18,19	82:19
continuing 21:33	42:7 43:17	8:4,21,26	Counsellor 32:9	decency 66:1	developed 24:30
59:28,30 60:15	44:3,11 47:10	10:27,29 11:17,20	Covid 75:27	decide 69:31	33:12,13 75:3
continuous 60:4	49:3 5	12:27,28,33	CORRIGAN 2:20,21	decided 25:31 26:5	76:14
contract 35:31 67:22	couple 16:17 18:8	13:5,9,27,31	74:31 75:22	38:27 46:12,26	developer 25:28,31
68:4	22:5 24:17,32	14:2,19 15:30,33	76:11,12 78:11,12	58:2	26:4,25 34:2
contracting 69:11	25:13 27:31 30:18	16:30,31 18:2,3,8	COUNCILLOR	decision 25:5 26:6	developers 17:11
contractor 66:8	33:9 40:29 42:11	19:18,19,21	2:11,12,13,14,15,	27:21,22,26 32:12	33:33 34:7 47:3,5
contracts 28:29 67:34	50:28 60:24 62:17	20:17,19 22:19	16,17,18,19,20,21	39:18 71:1,24	67:8
contrary 44:6 46:1	66:6 68:13 87:5	23:22 24:6,7	,22,23,24,25,26,2	72:11 73:20 87:21	developing 24:25
contributing 83:15	courage 25:11 27:18	27:26,27,28,29,30	7,28,29,30,31,32,	decisions 10:20	70:15
contribution 39:13	49:32	29:23,24 30:14,15	34	25:33,34 26:10	development 9:34
40:13 42:6	courageous 87:1	31:14,15,	3:1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9	35:7 42:33 43:4	16:2 23:16,20
54:13,16 56:20	course 18:33 56:21,28	CEO 42:13	,10,11,12,13,14,1	48:18 77:15,16,18	25:4,5,29
62:14 65:12 87:16	69:32	Chapel 19:25	5,16,17,18,19,20,	decline 66:29	31:26,28,31,33
contributions 42:25	court 11:2,3,22,24,27	21:11,30	21,22,23,24,25,26	decongestion 75:20	34:26 41:32 46:33
65:13 74:27 87:21	12:3,4	Charlesland 19:15	,27,28,29,30,31,3	deduce 38:11	47:4 50:27
control 13:23 24:29	27:11,15,21	Chief 6:28 11:3	2,33	deemed 24:24	75:2,34 78:1
controlling 12:12		12:14,23 13:34	4:1,2,6,7,15,16,23	deep 84:12	

developments 25:6 26:13,23 34:2 39:5 40:6 45:31,32 75:1,5,24,26,28	displaying 33:14 disposal 7:4,12,19,27 8:8 dissent 77:27 84:25 distance 77:2 districts 18:28 35:29,30 63:11 68:5,6 87:30 diverse 34:24 diversion 18:31 divide 51:16,19,22 division 9:32 10:7,22 43:18 44:11,12 divisions 44:3 doctor 79:12 document 13:20 31:27 33:33 34:1 documentation 21:31,32 67:25 does 26:29 28:29 42:17 54:23 57:3 58:6 65:4 77:1,11 86:25,34 doesn't 11:33 18:15 39:33 40:19 58:7 60:24 63:18 dog 56:23 73:6 74:16 dogs 72:15,18 doing 12:10 30:30 37:3 42:23 50:9 51:5 56:24,28 61:15 64:8 65:20 83:11 domalley 1:50 dominated 6:14 don't 4:8 12:11,25 17:32 19:6 26:15,25,26 27:4,9 28:13 31:2,11 32:9,16 37:28,30 39:24 41:23,26,33,34 47:3 48:9,21,22,27 49:22 50:19 51:12 52:21,25 53:2,23,29 54:4,30 55:19,33 56:4 57:32 58:3,4,6 59:7 60:11,34 61:3 62:4,11 63:1,3,14 66:13,15 70:22 71:29 72	41:16 42:18 43:17 44:10,11,12 51:1,15,20 52:1 53:27 54:22 56:21 58:6 59:33 62:28 70:8 76:24 80:31 83:28 84:3 85:16,18,19 86:6 87:29 dozen 50:30 drink 84:11 drive 30:24 38:32 54:31 56:8 64:28 driven 64:32 78:7 drivers 38:2 83:20 84:4,9,20 driving 84:11,13 drop 49:30 dropped 9:17 dry 78:8 during 8:34 25:4 69:26 86:10 dust 29:8 duties 82:16 duty 72:23 dwellings 25:21 Danny 5:3,4,5,9,10,15 Dargle 8:10 30:27 Darragh 80:10 Dart 30:34 75:6,7,18 David 70:4 Dáil 50:34 Dedicated 4:31 9:19 14:15 75:8 Delahanty 78:28 Delahunt 79:1 Dell 25:14 Dempsey 4:3,5,16 Department's 80:31 Derek 3:10 19:19 74:18 76:19 86:18 Des 5:27,28 Devreaux 35:1 DERMOT 3:16,17 15:18 63:32 71:1 77:4,5 Director 11:13 15:16 24:13,31 54:34 Directorate 9:19 24:1 Diseases 69:23 District 15:16,17 16:3 18:11,12,24,25,29 ,33 19:2,10,11 44:10 58:20,21 76:8 80:17 86:22 election 49:23 55:21 59:7 78:16,23 86:22 87:30 88:9,12 elections 15:4 67:15 78:20,29,34 86:28 electrical 34:17 electrics 34:15 elements 75:15 elephant 73:32 eligibility 57:24 eligible 25:24 52:23 57:22 58:3 eliminated 9:8 else 17:28 24:8 31:28 45:33 50:9 62:10 68:15 81:9 email 16:4 37:29 44:17,20 79:29 emailing 44:19 emails 17:28 44:21 embellishments 28:16 emissions 38:17 emphasis 47:25 employed 68:29,30,31 69:3	Due 11:22 39:9 41:22 81:34 Dun 76:4 Dunlavin 23:34 DUNNE 2:26,27 5:21,22 7:17 8:4,8,14 Dún 58:29 E each 33:32 36:22 49:14,30 56:16,17 68:25 69:24 78:15 79:2 83:17,26,27 88:1 earlier 6:11 16:25 32:31 42:11,29 52:7,13,34 61:9 65:12 79:5 83:34 early 11:9 14:7 70:10 earn 15:12 ears 48:11 easier 70:9 east 11:8,9,11,13 12:9,23,26 13:1 17:3 19:2 40:6 49:4 50:18,29 73:33 74:7 76:23 easy 14:9,10 22:33 28:5 64:29 78:23 79:15 81:5 echo 18:3 20:13 economic 8:33 39:25 56:8 81:18 economy 80:13 educate 84:4 education 10:1 effect 54:24,28 effectively 31:24 effects 38:16 efficiency 10:16 effing 43:32 effort 64:27 egg 56:8 eight 24:22 62:31 63:5 76:16 either 14:10 59:8,18 73:8 elaborate 12:12 83:17 elderly 79:27 elected 6:14,19 14:28,29 24:29 25:3,12 26:6 44:10 58:20,21 76:8 80:17 86:22 election 49:23 55:21 59:7 78:16,23 86:22 87:30 88:9,12 elections 15:4 67:15 78:20,29,34 86:28 electrical 34:17 electrics 34:15 elements 75:15 elephant 73:32 eligibility 57:24 eligible 25:24 52:23 57:22 58:3 eliminated 9:8 else 17:28 24:8 31:28 45:33 50:9 62:10 68:15 81:9 email 16:4 37:29 44:17,20 79:29 emailing 44:19 emails 17:28 44:21 embellishments 28:16 emissions 38:17 emphasis 47:25 employed 68:29,30,31 69:3	employee 4:18 employing 68:32 employment 18:9 57:34 82:2 encountered 72:15 encourage 39:23 81:27 encouragement 70:6 encouraging 81:18 end 6:6 9:2,6 22:8 24:23 27:15 32:10,11 33:22,23,24 35:12,21 43:14 57:21 endeavour 77:13 ends 37:9 energy 8:34 10:16 28:10 86:18 enforcement 21:6 33:16 50:21 51:3 55:25,29 58:14 59:28 60:11,34 67:4,6 engage 19:17 46:13 53:29 80:10 engaged 45:26 engagement 21:33 engaging 13:1 engineer 23:19 47:21 82:13 engineering 38:9 39:7 engineers 32:33 33:1 35:29 49:6 57:10 enhance 38:16 80:12 82:31 enhanced 45:1 enjoy 17:1 42:8 49:19 51:33 enjoyed 4:32 15:17 49:24 enjoying 49:22 enough 26:9 31:30 32:2 41:5 42:19,34 44:10,34 48:13 51:29 53:5 58:22 61:1 72:20 enquired 68:10 ensure 61:18 78:18,19 entail 22:14 entered 35:31 enthusiastic 28:1 45:11 entire 26:13 entirely 9:8 20:4 71:16 entitled 7:32 11:13 48:23 49:24 79:27 entity 25:25 entrance 29:17 30:22 entry 74:33 environment 11:31 47:16 58:13 67:3 86:32 environs 75:4 equally 15:10 erect 69:9 70:22 erected 22:30 70:24 erecting 47:16 eroded 16:13 erosion 30:8 32:14 57:11 62:31 63:4 66:32 escalate 43:22 especially 4:26 51:30 54:14,23,24,29 62:19 63:11 69:20 77:1 79:8 86:4	essential 14:28 16:26 18:30 19:30,34 79:34 80:28 essentially 18:17 19:26 established 9:18 22:26 67:12 76:7 establishing 11:9 estate 17:27 27:14 estates 29:18 estimate 57:24 estimated 69:23 euro 82:32 even 23:3 38:7 41:16 58:20 63:1,18,19 65:33 72:30 73:3 79:32 85:18 evening 41:4 85:17 eventually 66:28 ever 6:28 9:15 39:24 60:18 62:12 63:12 66:33 84:17 every 18:24 31:32 34:13 40:19,25 41:4 44:34 47:31 48:30 49:19,30 59:4,26 60:14,15,25 63:27 64:27 76:13 82:2,3 84:18 87:34 88:8 everybody 2:5 5:24 6:1 28:9 36:6,13 43:15 51:13,21 62:10,11 63:7,15 66:1 70:27 80:29 87:4 88:9 everyone's 79:9,10 everyone 24:8 43:28 48:23 49:14 60:16 86:29 87:6 everything 19:18 31:28 33:21 41:16 44:21 46:11 51:23 81:9 86:7 everywhere 18:18 29:13 exact 12:17 33:7 exactly 31:1 33:4 44:4 71:29 examine 58:2 74:32 77:27 examined 77:23 78:3 examining 32:21 example 17:12 42:24 59:14 69:17 excellent 14:11 15:17 49:1 except 79:11 81:8 exception 82:10 exceptionally 22:34 excess 8:23,25 9:28,31 10:25 13:7,12 excesses 10:4 excluded 52:26 excuse 8:3 33:11,17 51:28 excuses 44:19 executive 6:29 11:3 12:14,23 14:1,24 15:22 16:11,32 20:17 26:27 27:30 29:25 31:12,15 37:26,27 38:21 44:15 46:15 48:5 52:18 54:19 55:16 58:9 66:7,17 68:25 73:27 82:13 executives 14:13 exemplary 50:8
---	--	--	---	--	--

exercise 45:12	faced 8:33	figure 5:6 12:17 31:1	30:16 34:16 40:28	from 4:3,25 5:4 6:13	Fox 4:5
exhibition 6:23	facelift 53:7	57:25	67:15 69:18	8:24	Frank 42:13
existing 22:27 47:26	facilitate 34:6	figures 50:7,9 52:22	follows 9:33 70:3	9:14,16,17,19,28	Fred 22:29
52:20	facilitation 53:27	83:19	football 5:28	10:6,9,19,26	Friday 14:7 15:27 26:3
exists 16:16	facilities 20:14,30	fill 14:17 40:8 54:2	footpaths 16:13,14	11:1,18,26,34	33:27
exit 74:33	25:15 29:1 32:7	filled 21:23	18:18 39:7	13:12 14:4,7,13	Friel 4:18 5:18
exiting 29:16	33:34 42:12,34	filthy 43:32	for 2:6 4:9,12,18,22	17:30 18:19,25,28	G
expand 20:8 28:28	46:12 47:5	final 61:21 66:3 69:2	5:18,22	20:6 21:17,18,27	gain 34:7
44:30	50:16,18 62:23	finalised 22:5	6:1,15,20,24	22:26,31 23:34	gallery 2:6
expanding 20:13,16	63:13,22	finalising 21:31,32	8:3,5,30,32	24:13 25:2,20	game 16:27 64:21
expansion 19:33	facility 30:2 53:18	22:2 33:24	9:26,27,28	27:3 28:29,31	gap 34:34 54:2 56:5
20:16	63:7 81:17	finally 10:1 15:22,24	10:4,6,11,13,14,2	29:6,17 30:9,10	63:16
expect 9:7 24:31	fact 16:15 18:15	19:14 27:8 29:10	5,26,27,29,32	31:27,28 32:3,9	gardens 28:20 32:15
expected 23:34 82:14	19:16 25:1,33	37:26 41:29 43:6	11:32 12:5,18,26	33:30 34:3,7,13	34:20
expenditure 8:23,28	38:21 60:5 64:24	61:8,27,33 77:21	13:3,6,11,21,23,2	35:10,19 36:2	gather 29:8
9:4,10,11,22,27,3	77:21 82:11	finance 9:18 68:30	8	37:5,6 38:10,34	gave 14:31 16:4 42:13
1 10:5,9,11,21,25	factor 38:6	financial 8:22,30	14:8,15,18,20,26,	39:30 40:12,1	58:23
13:7	factors 83:15	9:2,23 10:5,7,32	32 15:5,31	front 13:20 39:23	gear 55:26
32:20,21,32,33	factory 25:14	12:1 13:21,23	16:1,11,14,28,32,	40:17 41:17	general 12:19 25:17
experience 45:9 55:13	facts 71:24	find 13:1 28:9 55:12	33 17:12,15	45:6,8 77:26	47:25 55:14 59:7
explain 48:21	faeces 73:6	63:9,16 72:29	18:6,34	fruit 53:7	70:6 71:24 78:23
explaining 65:31	failed 26:2 49:33	78:26	19:1,5,6,7,9,10,12	fruition 63:15	generally 32:8 72:28
explanations 10:4	failure 51:15	finding 28:3 72:29	,15,16,22,28	fruitless 45:12	generated 9:5
explanatory 37:18	fairly 32:26 36:21	finish 30:34 33:23	20:3,14,21,29,30	frustrating 21:33	generating 18:10
80:20	58:28 76:21 80:19	43:28 46:18 65:28	21:7,11,17	55:12	generous 45:34
express 38:4 59:1	fairness 18:21,25,26	finished 17:28 28:17	foreigner 65:29	frustration 45:25	gentleman 5:5
expressed 29:15	25:15,17 40:8	33:20,21 43:27	foremost 49:17	48:24 66:25	gentry 25:2
expressing 36:10	61:23	46:21 47:11	foreseen 36:29	full 9:11 18:16 20:15	genuine 50:12
expression 5:18 28:27	faith 38:9	finishing 66:8 67:23	forest 72:28	38:9 41:3 74:22	geographic 34:22
33:27	fall 11:33 58:6	fire 23:33 24:1 31:17	forested 69:20 70:14	78:30 82:2 83:25	geographical 40:15
expressions 28:20,22	fallen 23:7	33:6,8 39:10	forestry 71:10	fully 12:5 74:32 78:19	get 4:13 6:6 12:16,31
34:24,27 35:32	fallout 50:3	53:23	forests 71:19	85:4	16:11 17:23
68:1,6,15	false 65:22	firm 23:10,12	forever 71:9	function 68:27	18:25,29 20:8,10
extend 5:32 29:25	familiar 47:14 79:27	firmly 31:25	forgot 16:15	functioning 14:29	21:1,7
54:9 68:5	families 4:5	firms 52:17	forgotten 5:15 21:31	81:17	24:21,29,30 25:10
extended 6:15	family	first	32:28 38:31	functions 16:2	26:12,19 27:1
extending 68:10	4:3,8,11,13,17,19,	6:10,15,17,18,19,	form 59:19 79:12	fund 10:21 21:18	30:4 32:9 33:7,23
extension 18:9 21:4	25,34 5:20,27,32	28 12:27 13:6	formal 8:27 40:4	28:15 30:13 32:5	34:12,17,19 35:16
35:28 45:17 60:28	14:17 49:18	16:1 19:21 24:7	86:21	33:19 34:11 52:33	36:3,5,15,27
62:6	58:18,31 60:6,7,8	25:22,26	formalised 39:28	53:1,4,5	37:23 39:25,30,34
extent 11:34	63:27 78:27	26:1,2,13 27:31	77:11	funded 38:5	41:11,22 43:8,29
extra 42:31 61:18	famous 24:18	28:14 34:20 35:13	formats 78:15	funding 10:14	44:17,23
73:21 78:32	fantastic 15:34 16:4	38:28 41:6 46:7	formed 17:13 75:31	16:11,13 20:3,21	45:5,10,11,22
extremely 17:19	21:16	47:18,31 48:3,33	former 14:13 42:13	21:12,13,17	46:26,27 47:5,34
24:11 43:19 66:24	36:23,26,28,31	49:17 51:27 54:12	46:15 56:21 59:5	29:20,29	48:27 50:5
eye 39:6 51:30	48:8 53:18	56:13 67:2	formerly 25:14	30:3,4,5,11 32:9	52:29,30 54:2
eyes 59:26	88:7,13	70:33,34 72:10,22	forth 20:30	34:13,25,28,33	55:27 57:1,10,14
EARLS 23:10 35:18	far 26:1 31:10 35:14	73:23 83:17	forthcoming 78:29,34	37:23 38:6,7	58:24 29:10,11
58:12 67:3	36:20 38:18 43:21	firstly 4:30 38:25 42:6	88:9	41:16,22,24	51:31 63:15 66:28
ECRIPP 30:12 34:33	49:12 56:16 63:2	44:16 86:1	forum 73:18	45:5,19 47:6,27	getting 17:6,27 21:7
35:1,9,11 62:34	66:32 76:31	fishermen 52:1	forward 16:7 17:17	56:6,12,34 57:8	22:18 24:4 29:6
63:6 66:24,25	farming 4:31	fit 30:2,4 35:19 39:26	18:1 27:20 35:9	62:21 75:11,13	40:8,23 47:1
Edward 3:28 4:1	fascinating 65:1	fitness 38:17	42:9 48:27 55:6	82:2	48:24,25 49:23
13:9,13,29 15:15	fatal 83:33	fitting 70:17	67:7 71:17 74:28	funds 10:19 17:30	50:32,34 57:15
23:22 80:8 81:26	fatalities 82:1 83:19	five 17:14,32	79:32 81:28 86:33	25:6 26:13,24,25	59:6 73:8
Efforts 75:13	father 5:33 60:8	19:9,28,34 20:4	87:22	28:15 32:11 41:23	76:31,32 79:15
Eireann 51:1	fear 44:3,11 71:2,3	21:15 33:32 45:15	forwarded 59:1	further 12:12,21	83:15 84:23
Emer 11:19 14:21	fears 80:15	63:6,21 64:1	forwards 39:34	21:20 30:5 32:2	gift 44:29
15:22 49:26 56:15	feel 37:33 38:30	65:12 68:32 74:20	fought 24:19	55:27,30 58:14,15	girl 4:3 58:30
Emergency 24:1	48:16,22 50:19	76:14 86:25 87:31	found 36:23 49:26	62:6 69:32,33	give 4:33 5:9 8:26
Enhancement 52:33	56:5 70:22 83:25	fix 23:7 66:13	50:10 55:12,14	70:16 72:8 73:8	15:9 20:23 21:20
53:1,4	84:22	fixed 13:25	63:26 69:18 78:21	future 10:11,12 22:10	22:21 25:18 34:16
Enterprise 30:1,3	feeling 86:30	flag 12:19 37:27	86:25	39:20 42:7 49:19	38:19 44:33 45:28
32:13 35:19,20	fellow 5:11	flat 60:19	founder 65:28	54:17 63:1,27	53:7,13 55:6
45:14 57:34	felt 31:30 32:1 46:16	flatly 26:20	four 17:14 22:17	67:26 75:1,4	64:25 66:12 76:28
Environmental 9:34	69:29	fleeing 50:8	24:18,21 35:30	Fassaroe 75:2	77:11
27:16 53:33	female 6:28,29	flippant 78:9	66:11 82:12 85:7	Fáil 5:19 70:5	given 6:29 14:9 34:33
Erika 2:26 8:18 36:18	fenced 19:16	flood 27:13	foyer 6:24	February 30:9 37:27	42:22 67:5,17
ESB 54:20,23 55:34	few 6:8 23:25 28:12	flooding 16:12 20:20	franchise 6:15	38:3 54:19 68:23	69:29 70:21
66:10	29:3 41:15 47:30	42:32	freaking 64:3	Ferris 2:28,29 8:13,14	86:17,21,24
European 78:28	48:3 51:27 52:10	floor 10:27 13:27	free 28:25 40:25	13:12 27:15	giving 44:3 64:27
Executive's 13:34	53:2 54:6	15:31 36:2	43:14,31,33 54:1	30:14,15 35:24	glad 24:27 79:17
15:31 16:10 17:5	58:29,34 71:7	flowing 43:14	freehold 7:32	68:22	glass 88:3
19:25 24:17,18	72:16 82:10	focus 39:21 64:28	frequency 75:7	Fianna 5:19 70:5	goes 13:3 19:23 53:3
28:12,16,29 51:26	fiddling 24:22	folio 7:28 8:9	fresh 31:12	Fine 36:6 46:3 60:2	65:4 72:3,31
52:12 64:3,8 66:3	field 5:6 12:21 20:15	follow 12:34 34:18	friend 40:23 84:11	Fitzgerald 2:30,31	74:11 76:27,31
67:29,33	50:4 72:23	35:2 40:11 47:22	friends 4:34 33:30	7:34 70:5	going 2:19 6:5,17 8:3
Éireann 66:26	fields 41:31 51:2	66:9	friendship 5:5 40:24	Flynn 2:32 8:6,15	10:32 11:32 12:17
F	69:19	followed 17:10 40:33	47:34 87:23	74:30	15:8 17:26
face 22:13 50:25	fifth 57:28	following 10:20	frightening 75:29	Fortune 2:34 3:1	18:27,30 19:6,27
86:34	fighting 40:17,19	12:15,20 28:13,23	85:18	27:28 81:34	22:3,17,24,29

23:12 24:19 25:30 26:15,34 27:5 28:25 29:1,3,32 30:22 32:18,26,27 33:4 35:9 36:26 37:21,29,30 38:3 39:3,11,27 43:16,29 44:2,33 46:5,17 48:17,27 49:22,28,31 50:19,26 54:8,34 golf 15:27 19:15 27:12 56:22 gone 5:15 17:9 23:3 39:33 47:19 57:3,4 60:9 68:2,15 good 4:9 14:10 16:17,18 24:11 28:26 32:20 34:22 42:19,23 43:1 47:15 49:7 51:12,14 52:7,8,33 53:12,34 58:30 61:1,17 62:20 67:13 72:1 74:6,24 79:21,33 82:22,30 got 5:3,8 11:8 15:11 27:2,12,28,34 33:11,27 46:11 56:17 57:1 63:26 71:34 83:18 governance 8:3:20 government 6:8,12,13 8:24,32 9:27 12:16 13:17 20:2 21:17 26:23,25 32:9 43:9,12 50:2 51:4 58:5,10 66:31 81:4,5 82:1,17,27 84:28 87:28 grade 38:12 82:9,13 gradient 20:22 graduates 69:3 grant 41:17 45:6 52:18,19,20,27 57:26 granted 25:7,18 63:10,12 grants 41:15 graphic 84:9 grasp 23:30 grass 62:2 69:19 72:17 74:22 grasses 69:20 grassland 69:19 grassy 69:16 70:14 grateful 52:9 gratitude 15:12 gravel 79:8 great 5:24,29 11:10 13:5,32 15:5,23 19:3,4 25:3 28:3 30:21 33:28 37:26 39:8,9,25 40:5,22,23 42:7 48:30 52:5 53:19 54:10 56:4,28 58:16,26 61:34 62:3,14,21,29 63:15 64:15 78:2 79:11 80:20 85:27 greater 84:18 greatest 5:9 70:14 ground 5:8 17:13 48:18 60:14 grounds 17:10 31:3 79:7	group 9:12 27:13 54:4 58:1 59:34 60:1,24,29 61:2 62:2,32 67:12,13,16 groups 27:20 34:24 43:21 53:15,26,29 65:19 67:14 77:14 growing 35:9 72:13 grown 18:33 growth 20:28 guess 15:2 guided 16:1,2 guidelines 79:25 guy 5:24 Gael 60:2 Gail 2:26 5:21 7:16 8:4 Garda 21:5 82:22 83:1,18 85:2 Gardai 21:25 33:15 82:25 83:29 Garden 55:28 56:22 81:14 Garvin 15:18 GAA 5:4,19,20 39:8 GALLAGHER 12:28 22:12 35:28 47:13 68:4 Georgina 17:16 Geraldine 4:34 Gerry 3:20,30 5:26 13:10 15:15 29:23 58:16,24 86:20 Gleeson 8:26 12:14 23:15 45:29 57:18 58:28 Glen 26:34 36:11 Glendalough 54:34 62:20 67:11,14 Glending 58:20 Glenmalure 5:11,14 55:4 Glenview 27:3,4 GLENNON 3:2,3 38:24,25 39:3 40:12,28 42:5 74:9,10 God 17:32 77:33 81:16 Government's 45:19 51:6 Grad 69:4 Graduate 69:2 Graham 5:32 Grand 6:14 62:33 63:5 Green 20:29 27:1 39:23 Greenway 16:22,24 19:2 20:24 22:2 Greystones 4:26 7:22 18:11,24,29,31,33 19:5,7,10 21:10 22:20,22,26,32 23:9 24:28 28:8,15,30,32 29:2,13,14 30:1,11 32:7 33:20 35:5,19 38:33 67:34 68:9,11,16,17 76:23,25,26,31,32 ,33 Griffith 7:29,31 Grimm 15:18 Grove 39:10 H had 5:9,20 6:28 12:28 14:34 16:6,12,14,17,23 19:3,28 21:23	23:16 24:9,11,14,20 25:7,11 26:4,27 27:9,18,20,32 28:2,12,15 30:9,10,32 31:9 35:14 36:16,22,28 37:16 40:23 42:14 52:27 53:27 54:25 55:34 58:26 61:16 62:25,32 63:29 67:33 68:1 70:31 71:7 73:28 79:2 hadn't 21:13 half 6:11 17:28 37:7,9 39:29 50:26,30 60:30 halls 79:1 hand 11:18 14:1 24:19 31:15 43:21 70:31 handed 24:21 25:2 handled 43:10 handling 22:24 73:14 hands 26:21 39:17 hang 72:27 hanging 53:7 happen 17:32 39:24 42:17 46:30 51:23 88:6 happened 11:3 19:8 21:22 24:28 25:3,27,31 39:4 45:27,30 60:13 81:24 happening 18:29 24:4,22 42:1 44:4 51:2 60:4,17 65:14 66:32 77:34 81:22 happens 39:20 51:19 70:20 happiness 47:31 happy 6:26 13:30 14:4 24:8 25:30 36:12 58:18,31 78:9 81:29 harbour 10:16 17:18 27:14 30:25 51:34 52:5 hard 14:26 17:19 25:25 40:11 43:6 49:4,11 55:12 56:10 59:34 63:9,16 65:33 74:22 has 4:20 9:15 10:10 11:1,21,25,28 12:29 13:2,22,24,27 14:9,11,22,24 15:15,16,23 16:22 17:25,28 18:5,17,33 19:8,15 20:9,10,28 21:13,14 23:7,16,20,25 24:2,10,13,23 25:20,28,31,32 26:8 27:2,21,22 31:6 32:24 34:23 35:31,34 36:30 38:8,26 39:6,11,33 40:14,22,33 hasn't 14:12 24:28 32:24 33:20 46:21 62:21 65:23 hatred 51:19,22	have 2:6 4:7 5:10,31 6:7,8,15,17,23,25, 28,31 7:16,34 8:11,30 10:24,30 11:8,13,14,15,17, 25,27,28 12:2,6,10,11,29 14:12,17,20,22,23 ,30,32 15:2,9,17,34 16:6,10,13,15,17, 19,24 17:5,9,16,19,26,2 9,33 18:5,13,21 19:5,7,26,27,28,2 9 20:2,7 21:18,30 22:22,26,28,29, haven't 14:34 17:10 32:28 33:11 35:25 36:22 38:31 41:12 45:9 56:17 60:12 64:23 66:6 67:8 having 11:24 12:25 14:10 15:17 47:6 49:13,32 54:29 60:9 77:10 85:13 haved 25:10 he'll 20:24 head 18:32 23:17 31:14 42:13 45:25 46:7,24 48:23 63:9 headed 56:24 heading 10:30 headline 17:7 heal 44:12 health 10:1 27:13 69:21,31 73:7 healthier 49:12 healthy 14:18 24:8 hear 5:25 17:31 24:34 26:27,28 31:32 36:26,30,33 45:25 48:12 62:4 65:1 70:29 87:10,11 heard 11:23 44:5 63:31 65:13,17 hearing 10:16 17:18 56:1 hearings 11:21 heartbeat 5:10 heartbreaking 60:8 heath 69:15 heavily 5:19 hectares 7:27 held 1:6 6:34 48:6 67:13 82:32 87:16 help 14:8 29:26 35:16 45:19 51:6,13 61:17 69:28 helpful 36:23 53:13 helping 50:11 helps 20:3 her 4:26 14:7,8,12,13,14 16:5 19:22 23:25,26,27,28 24:8,9,13,14 26:27,28 29:25 38:27,28,31 39:6,13,14 40:18 47:31 49:1 51:31 63:25,26,27 64:10 66:6 79:2,27,28 83:11 here 3:5,33 4:18 6:17,24 11:15 12:19 15:9,10 16:14 17:14,20,32 19:27 24:19 25:1 26:8 30:32 32:1	35:2 37:12,27,30 38:6,27,28,32 39:19 40:18 48:6,18 49:22,26,34 50:3,20 51:8,12 54:19 55:22 58:23,29 60:15 61:2,18 62:1,5 64:31 65:12,14 66:10 76:7 80:21,23,27 heritage 8:33 73:18 hers 24:12 36:17 herself 23:29 27:19 high 8:34 12:3 22:16 27:11 45:15 52:23 83:13,20 higher 32:26 57:26 68:14 highest 9:15 57:28 highlight 48:3 highlighted 81:14 highlights 27:33 81:13 hikers 69:14 hill 18:11 69:14 74:3 him 5:7 15:18 35:3 39:18 49:33 59:3 63:31 65:17 hind 40:7 his 4:10,12,13,19,21, 33 5:7,12,13,14,20 11:12 24:31 39:18,24,28 49:32 59:2,4,5 60:9 65:12,14,24,30 70:6 72:4 84:11 historic 6:7 25:5 history 6:13 hit 65:29 85:20 holder 66:25 82:32 holdings 46:25 holiday 22:31 home 4:20,21 6:20 53:16,29 55:11 61:17 62:25 homeless 64:25 honest 23:27 31:13 55:13 59:14 65:14 73:7 77:33 honestly 50:3 honour 88:10 hook 28:8 hooray 25:3 hope 4:13 17:1 19:23 21:30 22:30 24:12,28,31 27:33 31:13 34:16 39:23 40:24 47:34 48:10 51:31 53:8 54:6 58:31 87:4 hoped 17:22 24:20 hopefully 16:17,32 33:22 51:32 57:2 64:5 87:5,32 hoping 16:16 horrendous 71:8 hospitality 45:18 hosting 65:3 hosts 72:17 hot 87:34 hotels 81:16 hours 78:8 house 7:21 42:20,25 48:22 60:6,9,25 housed 63:15 houses 17:9,11 19:31 20:5 42:24 50:22,31 59:25	60:13 63:11,13,14 65:22 81:24 how 14:26 29:19,32 31:1 32:27,33 35:14 40:15 43:10 52:9,21,22,23 54:5 60:12,34 63:10,14 67:7 71:13,20,28,31 74:6 77:6 86:34 88:13 huge 18:17 33:29 34:28 36:22 37:29 40:31 41:1,31 46:29 47:3 53:4 54:13 55:5 61:27,29 64:15 71:3,29 72:14 76:14,17 80:16 85:21 hugely 37:7 human 65:26 humanist 38:29 humans 70:9 72:17 humid 69:18 hummed 25:10 hundred 5:6 hundreds 47:10 63:10,11 husband 5:33 huts 52:1 Hall 17:16 59:14,16,17 62:28 He's 22:29 35:1 39:27 49:34 59:3 Heights 8:10 Helen 2:3 5:31 8:20 13:18 69:34 75:21 79:6 85:6 Herbert 27:2 Hold 6:5 26:19 70:32 85:29 87:13 Hollywood 39:7,32 47:19 Hotel 19:5,7 21:10 27:4 50:17 62:33 63:5 81:8 Housing 8:4,10,11,32 9:11,16,17,19,33 10:15,22 15:11 17:24 24:20,30 25:24,25 26:23 29:29 32:7 34:1,11 38:29 42:23 48:21 49:2,5,7 54:15 64:22 75:34 78:1,18 80:10 However 9:1,17 38:10 57:22 67:24 HPSE 69:26,33 HSE 69:31 70:8 71:11,33 73:8 Hub 30:1 32:13 35:19 Hyland 31:6 I idea 28:26 31:2 37:1 47:15 74:24 85:15 ideal 46:25 identified 21:13 78:33 ignore 50:23 77:10 ignoring 50:24,31 illegal 61:34 imagine 68:7 73:4 immediate 59:17 61:30 immigrants 43:17 immigration 43:10,15 65:27
--	--	---	--	--	---

impact 12:21 29:32 38:17 46:2 75:18 77:10 86:4	71:18 72:1,31 73:1,8 74:4,5,17 77:24 78:24 82:15 83:4	isolated 66:31 issue 12:20 13:24 18:14,20 21:6 27:11 29:20,32 30:2,18,24 31:10,19 34:32 38:12,14 41:10 43:6,13 46:4 53:23 57:31 58:8 59:24 60:28 61:9 67:1 75:30,32 76:3,6,9,22 77:25,27 80:20 84:16	Irish 43:32 53:10,20 61:28,30 62:3 78:18 Irishman 65:29	kilometre 57:16 kind 35:6 37:18 38:27 51:30 53:27 54:4 56:8 57:8 58:23 66:15 85:17 86:12	42:15 46:10,13,25 47:10 53:19 55:11 56:31 59:33 60:30 66:34 69:15
impacts 77:8	informed 32:24 35:22 60:16 67:19,21 71:2,28 72:11	27:11 29:20,32 30:2,18,24 31:10,19 34:32 38:12,14 41:10 43:6,13 46:4 53:23 57:31 58:8 59:24 60:28 61:9 67:1 75:30,32 76:3,6,9,22 77:25,27 80:20 84:16	J job 14:9,24 42:23 48:13,25,28 49:14,15 51:8 62:3 83:11 88:2,7,12 jobs 14:10 join 2:19 19:34 24:7 27:31 29:19 36:20 38:25 63:24 joined 68:12 joke 39:31 journey 15:25 52:14 journeys 84:19 joy 15:15 63:34 judgments 11:27 judicial 27:19 30:17,21 jumping 63:30 junction 39:8 junctions 76:27 jury 6:14 justice 4:13 Jackie 4:8 James 65:28 January 62:32 Joe 2:15 4:34 10:28 20:23 21:1,20 22:7,24 24:6 31:16,20 32:17 36:7 38:28 39:11 47:29 59:31 66:34 67:20,28 81:33	knocked 31:14 knocking 48:20 know 5:3,11 11:34 12:9,34 13:2 14:6,9,13,34 15:12,33 16:12,23 17:15,18,31 18:17,20 19:6 20:9,32 21:14,18,33 26:29 27:1,2,8,9,34 28:15,16 29:6,10,12,14 30:21,28 31:2,11,19 32:10,16 33:4 34:22,27 35:1,27,29 37:17,21,30,32 38:14 39:28 40:18,19 41:16 42:8,14 knowing 74:3 knowledge 37:15 60:18 64:4 73:14 82:9,31 87:21 knowledgeable 28:1 known 4:5 7:20,29 8:10 18:5 38:8 58:19 59:2 63:25 64:1 66:6 83:28 knows 59:11 60:15 Kathleen 4:10 KAVANAGH 3:4,5 62:9,10 66:24 67:11 72:12,13 81:32 83:8,10 84:24,27 85:1,12,24,27 Kelly 1:33 Kennedy 2:32 3:6,7 5:11 8:6,15 36:15 54:11,12 55:33 74:30 Kids 5:24 39:8 73:13 Kilbride 5:28 50:18 59:14,31 Kildare 82:11 Kilkenny 14:6,20 19:22 34:20 40:7 48:34 49:5 57:7 58:29 70:4 Kilquade 18:10 42:29,31 Kindlestown 7:22 Kippure 50:22 55:25 58:12 59:14,24,27 61:34 66:19 67:2 KWETB 68:34	landholders 46:10 landlord 6:14 52:25,26 57:32 landowners 21:33 22:4 23:4 47:21 lands 23:17 41:29,30 42:2 45:22 46:24,27 75:2 lanes 75:8 language 44:6 65:18 large 20:14,28 46:10 71:10 84:17 larger 84:18 largest 73:32 75:24,25 last 6:5,28 8:4 9:10,15 11:6 14:3,8,16 15:34 16:32 17:9,22 19:4,28 21:12 22:12,23 23:25 25:4 26:32 27:10 29:27 30:9 33:27 34:14,15,18 35:20 39:19 40:34 41:10 42:5 43:8 47:21,33 48:5,9,12,34 51:27 52:10 53:2 54:6 55:4 59:22 60:23,27 61:16,23,33 62:17 63:21 late 4:30 21:12 26:18,20 29:30 34:15 88:5 later 21:23 38:32 39:11 latest 39:8 laughing 51:28 laughs 40:23 launch 22:31 launched 82:12 law 27:23 laws 50:24 layout 47:22 lead 38:12 leader 5:9 39:16 52:7 leading 27:19,21 29:18 leaflet 69:27 learn 15:12 learned 15:10,11 learnt 87:22 lease 7:6,14,22 leash 48:10 leasing 17:13 least 12:25 19:31 27:25 77:22 84:28 leave 35:16 49:31 leaves 8:6 leaving 24:13 59:3 61:14 lecturing 65:27 left 26:14,21 29:8 40:6 41:4,25 49:7,11 55:21 59:9,11,18,20 81:8 legal 12:2 25:10 28:30 67:34 legislation 58:4,7 81:4,6 leisure 19:14,16 53:10,18 56:34 69:15 length 39:33 42:30 57:16 less 6:12 80:1
implore 70:16	innocent 65:21	44:28,29 45:31 48:3,12 55:32 58:1 59:16,19 61:27,29 62:5 66:10,31 74:32 76:15 78:23 86:6	Irish 43:32 53:10,20 61:28,30 62:3 78:18 Irishman 65:29	knocked 31:14 knocking 48:20 know 5:3,11 11:34 12:9,34 13:2 14:6,9,13,34 15:12,33 16:12,23 17:15,18,31 18:17,20 19:6 20:9,32 21:14,18,33 26:29 27:1,2,8,9,34 28:15,16 29:6,10,12,14 30:21,28 31:2,11,19 32:10,16 33:4 34:22,27 35:1,27,29 37:17,21,30,32 38:14 39:28 40:18,19 41:16 42:8,14 knowing 74:3 knowledge 37:15 60:18 64:4 73:14 82:9,31 87:21 knowledgeable 28:1 known 4:5 7:20,29 8:10 18:5 38:8 58:19 59:2 63:25 64:1 66:6 83:28 knows 59:11 60:15 Kathleen 4:10 KAVANAGH 3:4,5 62:9,10 66:24 67:11 72:12,13 81:32 83:8,10 84:24,27 85:1,12,24,27 Kelly 1:33 Kennedy 2:32 3:6,7 5:11 8:6,15 36:15 54:11,12 55:33 74:30 Kids 5:24 39:8 73:13 Kilbride 5:28 50:18 59:14,31 Kildare 82:11 Kilkenny 14:6,20 19:22 34:20 40:7 48:34 49:5 57:7 58:29 70:4 Kilquade 18:10 42:29,31 Kindlestown 7:22 Kippure 50:22 55:25 58:12 59:14,24,27 61:34 66:19 67:2 KWETB 68:34	landholders 46:10 landlord 6:14 52:25,26 57:32 landowners 21:33 22:4 23:4 47:21 lands 23:17 41:29,30 42:2 45:22 46:24,27 75:2 lanes 75:8 language 44:6 65:18 large 20:14,28 46:10 71:10 84:17 larger 84:18 largest 73:32 75:24,25 last 6:5,28 8:4 9:10,15 11:6 14:3,8,16 15:34 16:32 17:9,22 19:4,28 21:12 22:12,23 23:25 25:4 26:32 27:10 29:27 30:9 33:27 34:14,15,18 35:20 39:19 40:34 41:10 42:5 43:8 47:21,33 48:5,9,12,34 51:27 52:10 53:2 54:6 55:4 59:22 60:23,27 61:16,23,33 62:17 63:21 late 4:30 21:12 26:18,20 29:30 34:15 88:5 later 21:23 38:32 39:11 latest 39:8 laughing 51:28 laughs 40:23 launch 22:31 launched 82:12 law 27:23 laws 50:24 layout 47:22 lead 38:12 leader 5:9 39:16 52:7 leading 27:19,21 29:18 leaflet 69:27 learn 15:12 learned 15:10,11 learnt 87:22 lease 7:6,14,22 leash 48:10 leasing 17:13 least 12:25 19:31 27:25 77:22 84:28 leave 35:16 49:31 leaves 8:6 leaving 24:13 59:3 61:14 lecturing 65:27 left 26:14,21 29:8 40:6 41:4,25 49:7,11 55:21 59:9,11,18,20 81:8 legal 12:2 25:10 28:30 67:34 legislation 58:4,7 81:4,6 leisure 19:14,16 53:10,18 56:34 69:15 length 39:33 42:30 57:16 less 6:12 80:1
implore 70:16	innuendo 59:7,20	44:28,29 45:31 48:3,12 55:32 58:1 59:16,19 61:27,29 62:5 66:10,31 74:32 76:15 78:23 86:6	Irish 43:32 53:10,20 61:28,30 62:3 78:18 Irishman 65:29	knocked 31:14 knocking 48:20 know 5:3,11 11:34 12:9,34 13:2 14:6,9,13,34 15:12,33 16:12,23 17:15,18,31 18:17,20 19:6 20:9,32 21:14,18,33 26:29 27:1,2,8,9,34 28:15,16 29:6,10,12,14 30:21,28 31:2,11,19 32:10,16 33:4 34:22,27 35:1,27,29 37:17,21,30,32 38:14 39:28 40:18,19 41:16 42:8,14 knowing 74:3 knowledge 37:15 60:18 64:4 73:14 82:9,31 87:21 knowledgeable 28:1 known 4:5 7:20,29 8:10 18:5 38:8 58:19 59:2 63:25 64:1 66:6 83:28 knows 59:11 60:15 Kathleen 4:10 KAVANAGH 3:4,5 62:9,10 66:24 67:11 72:12,13 81:32 83:8,10 84:24,27 85:1,12,24,27 Kelly 1:33 Kennedy 2:32 3:6,7 5:11 8:6,15 36:15 54:11,12 55:33 74:30 Kids 5:24 39:8 73:13 Kilbride 5:28 50:18 59:14,31 Kildare 82:11 Kilkenny 14:6,20 19:22 34:20 40:7 48:34 49:5 57:7 58:29 70:4 Kilquade 18:10 42:29,31 Kindlestown 7:22 Kippure 50:22 55:25 58:12 59:14,24,27 61:34 66:19 67:2 KWETB 68:34	landholders 46:10 landlord 6:14 52:25,26 57:32 landowners 21:33 22:4 23:4 47:21 lands 23:17 41:29,30 42:2 45:22 46:24,27 75:2 lanes 75:8 language 44:6 65:18 large 20:14,28 46:10 71:10 84:17 larger 84:18 largest 73:32 75:24,25 last 6:5,28 8:4 9:10,15 11:6 14:3,8,16 15:34 16:32 17:9,22 19:4,28 21:12 22:12,23 23:25 25:4 26:32 27:10 29:27 30:9 33:27 34:14,15,18 35:20 39:19 40:34 41:10 42:5 43:8 47:21,33 48:5,9,12,34 51:27 52:10 53:2 54:6 55:4 59:22 60:23,27 61:16,23,33 62:17 63:21 late 4:30 21:12 26:18,20 29:30 34:15 88:5 later 21:23 38:32 39:11 latest 39:8 laughing 51:28 laughs 40:23 launch 22:31 launched 82:12 law 27:23 laws 50:24 layout 47:22 lead 38:12 leader 5:9 39:16 52:7 leading 27:19,21 29:18 leaflet 69:27 learn 15:12 learned 15:10,11 learnt 87:22 lease 7:6,14,22 leash 48:10 leasing 17:13 least 12:25 19:31 27:25 77:22 84:28 leave 35:16 49:31 leaves 8:6 leaving 24:13 59:3 61:14 lecturing 65:27 left 26:14,21 29:8 40:6 41:4,25 49:7,11 55:21 59:9,11,18,20 81:8 legal 12:2 25:10 28:30 67:34 legislation 58:4,7 81:4,6 leisure 19:14,16 53:10,18 56:34 69:15 length 39:33 42:30 57:16 less 6:12 80:1
implore 70:16	input 23:21	44:28,29 45:31 48:3,12 55:32 58:1 59:16,19 61:27,29 62:5 66:10,31 74:32 76:15 78:23 86:6	Irish 43:32 53:10,20 61:28,30 62:3 78:18 Irishman 65:29	knocked 31:14 knocking 48:20 know 5:3,11 11:34 12:9,34 13:2 14:6,9,13,34 15:12,33 16:12,23 17:15,18,31 18:17,20 19:6 20:9,32 21:14,18,33 26:29 27:1,2,8,9,34 28:15,16 29:6,10,12,14 30:21,28 31:2,11,19 32:10,16 33:4 34:22,27 35:1,27,29 37:17,21,30,32 38:14 39:28 40:18,19 41:16 42:8,14 knowing 74:3 knowledge 37:15 60:18 64:4 73:14 82:9,31 87:21 knowledgeable 28:1 known 4:5 7:20,29 8:10 18:5 38:8 58:19 59:2 63:25 64:1 66:6 83:28 knows 59:11 60:15 Kathleen 4:10 KAVANAGH 3:4,5 62:9,10 66:24 67:11 72:12,13 81:32 83:8,10 84:24,27 85:1,12,24,27 Kelly 1:33 Kennedy 2:32 3:6,7 5:11 8:6,15 36:15 54:11,12 55:33 74:30 Kids 5:24 39:8 73:13 Kilbride 5:28 50:18 59:14,31 Kildare 82:11 Kilkenny 14:6,20 19:22 34:20 40:7 48:34 49:5 57:7 58:29 70:4 Kilquade 18:10 42:29,31 Kindlestown 7:22 Kippure 50:22 55:25 58:12 59:14,24,27 61:34 66:19 67:2 KWETB 68:34	landholders 46:10 landlord 6:14 52:25,26 57:32 landowners 21:33 22:4 23:4 47:21 lands 23:17 41:29,30 42:2 45:22 46:24,27 75:2 lanes 75:8 language 44:6 65:18 large 20:14,28 46:10 71:10 84:17 larger 84:18 largest 73:32 75:24,25 last 6:5,28 8:4 9:10,15 11:6 14:3,8,16 15:34 16:32 17:9,22 19:4,28 21:12 22:12,23 23:25 25:4 26:32 27:10 29:27 30:9 33:27 34:14,15,18 35:20 39:19 40:34 41:10 42:5 43:8 47:21,33 48:5,9,12,34 51:27 52:10 53:2 54:6 55:4 59:22 60:23,27 61:16,23,33 62:17 63:21 late 4:30 21:12 26:18,20 29:30 34:15 88:5 later 21:23 38:32 39:11 latest 39:8 laughing 51:28 laughs 40:23 launch 22:31 launched 82:12 law 27:23 laws 50:24 layout 47:22 lead 38:12 leader 5:9 39:16 52:7 leading 27:19,21 29:18 leaflet 69:27 learn 15:12 learned 15:10,11 learnt 87:22 lease 7:6,14,22 leash 48:10 leasing 17:13 least 12:25 19:31 27:25 77:22 84:28 leave 35:16 49:31 leaves 8:6 leaving 24:13 59:3 61:14 lecturing 65:27 left 26:14,21 29:8 40:6 41:4,25 49:7,11 55:21 59:9,11,18,20 81:8 legal 12:2 25:10 28:30 67:34 legislation 58:4,7 81:4,6 leisure 19:14,16 53:10,18 56:34 69:15 length 39:33 42:30 57:16 less 6:12 80:1
implore 70:16	insert 31:27	44:28,29 45:31 48:3,12 55:32 58:1 59:16,19 61:27,29 62:5 66:10,31 74:32 76:15 78:23 86:6	Irish 43:32 53:10,20 61:28,30 62:3 78:18 Irishman 65:29	knocked 31:14 knocking 48:20 know 5:3,11 11:34 12:9,34 13:2 14:6,9,13,34 15:12,33 16:12,23 17:15,18,31 18:17,20 19:6 20:9,32 21:14,18,33 26:29 27:1,2,8,9,34 28:15,16 29:6,10,12,14 30:21,28 31:2,11,19 32:10,16 33:4 34:22,27 35:1,27,29 37:17,21,30,32 38:14 39:28 40:18,19 41:16 42:8,14 knowing 74:3 knowledge 37:15 60:18 64:4 73:14 82:9,31 87:21 knowledgeable 28:1 known 4:5 7:20,29 8:10 18:5 38:8 58:19 59:2 63:25 64:1 66:6 83:28 knows 59:11 60:15 Kathleen 4:10 KAVANAGH 3:4,5 62:9,10 66:24 67:11 72:12,13 81:32 83:8,10 84:24,27 85:1,12,24,27 Kelly 1:33 Kennedy 2:32 3:6,7 5:11 8:6,15 36:15 54:11,12 55:33 74:30 Kids 5:24 39:8 73:13 Kilbride 5:28 50:18 59:14,31 Kildare 82:11 Kilkenny 14:6,20 19:22 34:20 40:7 48:34 49:5 57:7 58:29 70:4 Kilquade 18:10 42:29,31 Kindlestown 7:22 Kippure 50:22 55:25 58:12 59:14,24,27 61:34 66:19 67:2 KWETB 68:34	landholders 46:10 landlord 6:14 52:25,26 57:32 landowners 21:33 22:4 23:4 47:21 lands 23:17 41:29,30 42:2 45:22 46:24,27 75:2 lanes 75:8 language 44:6 65:18 large 20:14,28 46:10 71:10 84:17 larger 84:18 largest 73:32 75:24,25 last 6:5,28 8:4 9:10,15 11:6 14:3,8,16 15:34 16:32 17:9,22 19:4,28 21:12 22:12,23 23:25 25:4 26:32 27:10 29:27 30:9 33:27 34:14,15,18 35:20 39:19 40:34 41:10 42:5 43:8 47:21,33 48:5,9,12,34 51:27 52:10 53:2 54:6 55:4 59:22 60:23,27 61:16,23,33 62:17 63:21 late 4:30 21:12 26:18,20 29:30 34:15 88:5 later 21:23 38:32 39:11 latest 39:8 laughing 51:28 laughs 40:23 launch 22:31 launched 82:12 law 27:23 laws 50:24 layout 47:22 lead 38:12 leader 5:9 39:16 52:7 leading 27:19,21 29:18 leaflet 69

let's 79:13	literally 16:13,18 23:7	28:3 30:28 33:28	42:17,29 46:32	53:19 54:34 62:20	44:16,19 45:1
let 12:27 15:13 27:8	75:23	38:2 39:4 40:23	54:13,14,15,16	67:11	46:29 47:11 49:31
36:16,17 43:6,28	little 4:4 6:11 18:21	45:32 46:1 48:9	57:8 60:25	masters 56:9	50:10 55:18 56:29
44:15 48:25 56:1	19:29 21:28 27:9	49:2,5,34	62:14,34 72:25	match 10:14	60:2 61:22 64:30
65:29 88:13	36:33 37:28 40:25	50:14,18,27	73:20 77:6,15	mates 5:14	66:18 67:15,17,19
lets 80:11,14	56:24 57:8	51:6,33	84:12 87:21	matter 9:17 11:21,32	75:20 78:2
letter 36:4 60:11	65:30,34 71:2	52:14,18,27,34	magnificent 27:10	12:4,9 17:31	mention 4:16 28:29
66:22 81:29 85:9	81:15	53:2,3,12,15,24,2	maintaining 82:22	26:30 31:23 38:19	43:21 54:28 83:18
letting 10:21 81:23	live 11:26 31:24	7 54:21 55:13	83:6	57:33 58:2 60:24	85:6
level 28:4 31:20 41:6	44:12,13 50:12	57:26 60:1 62:19	maintenance	67:7 69:32 80:17	mentioned 11:15
50:1 58:19 60:25	55:25 71:8,13	64:19 65:33 73:27	29:29,30,32	matters 9:20 11:25	14:23 42:11 44:28
levelled 60:14	72:25	81:1 83:34 87:22	32:7,8	20:20	49:2 52:34 61:9
leverage 45:20 56:12	lives 14:25 54:14,15	lots 6:21 41:14 51:31	34:11,12,14,18	may 1:16 2:1 5:15	64:11 83:34
leveraged 16:14	55:5 64:27 71:13	62:2 83:15	67:23	7:15 16:25 27:11	mentioning 15:13
levies 46:32,34	living 4:26 29:6 42:27	love 15:26 18:8 37:18	maith 4:24 18:3 19:18	35:8 38:21 47:20	43:7
liability 10:31,32	43:2 63:17 72:22	49:15 58:26 87:26	62:8 70:1 79:31	62:17 65:29 68:16	mesh 22:15
12:2,7,15,18	86:5	loved 15:9	major 27:11 46:9	69:26 70:18	message 33:14 50:34
liaise 21:25 53:26	loads 62:34	lovely 5:29 47:33	84:16	75:15,18,27 77:22	83:14
69:32 73:20	loans 9:16	49:14	majority 6:16 9:11	78:26 83:19,30	messages 47:33 83:5
liaising 18:21 22:4	local 6:8,12,13	low 53:7 69:30 70:7	79:8 87:26	86:7	met 23:17,19 35:20
82:34	8:24,31,32 9:27	71:12 73:4 74:21	make 22:13 23:3	maybe 5:7 11:12 14:4	37:1,6 38:27,28
liaison 38:10	11:6,33 12:16	76:30	26:28 31:20	17:14 20:23 28:13	45:26 47:21
lick 57:4	13:17 15:4 16:3	luck 15:4 58:18,30,32	36:5,21 42:11,26	36:34 37:22,31	67:8,17 76:17
life 4:32 15:25 31:1	17:8 20:5 25:1,28	59:3 64:16 86:29	48:30 56:16,26	45:28,29 52:21,29	meters 7:12,19
42:26 60:12 71:31	27:26 29:20 33:3	87:3,4,19,30	62:17 66:27 68:13	53:13,14,24,28	methods 69:29
86:25	37:15 38:4,7,8	88:10	71:24 74:10	54:6 58:24	metres 7:4 8:9
lifelong 72:24	40:30,31 41:6,30	lucky 44:9 72:18	79:24,28 80:3,29	61:17,29,30	metropolitan 76:30
lifestyle 38:17	44:30,31,32	81:17	84:20 85:22	65:2,4,5 71:23	78:9
light 23:23 38:13,21	46:16,17,18,19,20	lunch 26:28	making 42:33 44:19	72:27 73:20,21,23	mic 36:7
69:15	48:19,20,22,29	Laboratory 7:20	48:18 50:14 51:6	74:5,20 76:28	micromanage 83:26
lighting 10:16	50:25 51:16,20,21	Lacken 55:4	60:27 61:18 64:31	77:17 79:29 80:21	might 2:3 6:23
41:20,25 47:25	52:14 53:13,26	Laoghaire 76:4	66:30 72:26	81:21 85:7 86:5	11:29,30
66:8,15	55:21,27 58:3,5	Largely 28:12	males 83:32	mayhem 43:25	12:7,10,12 15:2
67:1,21,22,23	59:33 62:24	Larkin 5:32,33	man 4:9,12,19,32	mean 44:29 59:14	19:7,17
lights 41:22,26	64:12,28 65:2	Laura 5:33 48:4	84:10	60:31 62:2 63:13	21:1,10,20 23:9
47:26,27 66:11	67:13,	Lawless 50:17	management 83:6	73:2 80:19	25:7 30:12
like 2:5	locally 18:13 48:18,22	LANE 21:22 22:8	management 9:18,34	81:4,14	31:17,20
4:2,4,8,11,24,30,3	83:17	32:18 33:7 47:18	12:1 13:34	means 22:34 63:6,13	32:6,12,16 34:28
3 5:22 6:25 12:7	locals 37:24	61:11 67:21	14:6,11,12 15:23	meant 63:7 79:5	35:10 39:19
14:5 15:4,22	location 69:29	LAP 45:22	18:19 23:33 24:1	meantime 22:26 23:1	41:5,7 42:1 44:25
19:11,21,25	locations 33:24 42:26	Leahy 1:33	30:2 40:16 68:33	measure 22:13 35:12	45:10,17,22,23,28
23:6,26 26:27,28	69:30	Leonora 21:10 23:9	87:34	measures 78:19 82:28	46:7,8 52:24
29:7,25 31:11	long 13:3 14:13,18	32:13,16 40:4	manager's 40:28	83:28 84:2	55:26,32 56:13
35:7 36:20	17:2 18:6 19:22	45:23 55:26,29	manager 11:10 15:16	mechanism 35:10	57:32 60:1
37:13,15,31	21:12 22:11 24:8	66:19 67:2	18:25 23:26 38:26	media 17:7 65:22	64:22,29 66:19,34
38:18,25,30	25:8 35:16 39:17	LEDs 47:26	managerial 40:18	83:5,6,7	68:13,15 71:3
39:5,18 40:13	42:17 46:28	LEONARD 3:8,9 36:16	managers 54:3	medical 79:12	72:3 73:2 85:32
41:16,20 42:4,33	58:19,31 59:3	51:10,11 56:20	managing 82:21	medium 22:9	migration 49:33 51:15
47:30	62:2,24 63:2,3	57:8,31,34	mandatory 80:13	meet 6:11 34:2 41:1	mill 60:5
48:3,11,29,33	64:4 66:6 69:20	73:10,11,34	manifestos 49:23	84:17 86:4,6	million 9:4,5,10 10:20
49:17,23,29	72:16,17 74:34	79:19,20 81:33	manner 12:2 21:15	meeting 1:3	33:28 42:25,30
51:19,29 52:18	81:23 82:4 87:20	84:31 85:10,11	28:34 74:2	6:5,6,10,18,33	46:32 52:20
53:3 55:3,9 59:7,8	look 6:25,31 17:34	LGMA 69:5	87:34	8:6,15 13:20	60:1,27
60:19 62:3,4	18:19,22 20:32	Liam 15:18	many 4:20 5:12 14:22	15:34 18:24 21:31	millions 47:1
63:19 64:1	21:5,24,28 30:32	Lidl 29:15	15:26 24:10,19	32:31 33:33 35:20	mind 4:8 26:25 55:33
liked 5:25	37:23 41:15	Listening 24:11 62:11	39:18 40:23,32	37:27 41:10,21,24	59:6 79:34
likelihood 72:29	42:8,25 43:3	Lockstown 39:9	41:25 47:34	42:31 47:19,22	mindful 31:33
74:21	45:13,32 47:27	Lodge 50:22 59:24,27	49:1,2 51:18	48:9 54:9,30	mindful 64:24
likely 69:18 74:23	51:11 53:14,24,34	Lorraine 12:27,33	52:21,22,23	61:24,28 62:17,33	mine 4:9
77:18 83:32	56:25 58:1 71:23	13:5 22:7 44:25	54:14,21,29	63:5 66:16,27	mini 56:22
likes 46:2	72:17 73:19,20,22	46:8	63:14,24 67:14	67:13,16 68:2	minimise 69:11
limited 7:14 47:6 56:7	76:6 78:4 79:9	Lourda 3:24 8:19	71:20,28 75:9	79:5 82:5	mitigating 32:22
75:18 82:16	81:26 83:27	27:27	78:8 81:3 86:18	85:31,32 86:23	minimum 17:11,26
limits 83:29	looked 17:15,31	LPR 7:30	87:20	87:7 88:16	minute 6:17 26:19
line 5:7 21:13 22:10	27:16 48:19 58:7	LSSIF 57:1,2	maps 22:28 74:4	meetings 12:9 19:28	36:17 49:19 60:34
33:2 35:14 57:25	looking 13:7,28 16:7	Ltd 1:47	mark 2:13 30:9 57:12	22:22 32:32 37:29	76:29,30 79:9
82:27	17:16 19:12,17	LUAS 30:33	86:21	40:18 44:32 60:22	85:29
lined 33:21	20:30 22:9,18	Lyme	marked 6:12	67:9 80:21 82:23	minutes 6:24,33 87:5
lingering 77:9	29:3 30:13 47:10	69:9,10,13,14,24,	market 22:15,17	83:5 84:34	miserably 26:3
link 18:31 21:15	48:17,21 50:15	25,27,28,30,33	23:11,13	member 4:31 14:5,28	misinformation 44:3
40:30,31 41:6	53:28,33 54:10	70:7,8,15,18	marketing 30:2	43:9 57:15	59:12 65:20 80:15
44:31,32 47:16	58:10 59:33 64:8	71:12,31,34 72:13	marking 6:24 32:31	members 2:3,6 6:4	miss 15:8 39:29
linked 73:22	84:23 86:31 87:3	73:4,33 74:22	33:2	8:3,16,21 9:26,27	missed 4:27 5:12 17:2
links 69:25	loop 18:32	M	markings 29:12,17,18	10:6,24 11:18	44:17 87:22
list 17:24 38:2 64:22	looped 21:26	machinery 10:15	31:19,20 83:28	12:19 13:5,14,19	missing 40:32 53:6,13
listed 11:7 12:31 36:1	losing 54:21	made 4:19,21 10:31	mass 68:11,13,16	14:4,23,29 17:13	mitigation 22:14
listen 51:8 72:9	loss 64:3	11:26,27 16:6	massive 59:30 60:27	18:28 20:19 22:19	mile 62:8
listened 24:12 43:30	lost 22:2 53:32 66:34	19:33 20:13 21:34	75:26	23:6,8,21 25:4	mobility 38:1 80:1
63:29 74:26	lot 4:20 9:22 12:4	23:5 25:4,33 26:6	master 17:16 20:30	26:6 30:8,17	modal 38:16 75:6
listing 12:24	16:21	36:22 38:30 39:14	23:16 41:32 42:13	31:16,26 33:13,15	model 52:9
	17:6,7,10,24 24:3	40:33 41:30	46:13,14,18,21,28	34:19 43:22	modelling 75:19

moderate 65:24	moving 8:21 24:29	76:19,20 77:6	never 5:15 25:11	11:7,21,27 12:9	occasions 50:29 58:22
moment 6:24 16:21	30:1 42:11 64:24	86:19	31:10 54:15	13:6,16,20,34	76:16 87:18
17:6,13 20:20	74:27	Molly 4:3,16	55:12,14 59:10	14:16,30 17:5,9	occupation
31:17,21,24	much 3:34 4:28	Mona 58:28	60:18 62:25 65:21	20:14,20,24	25:19,23,24
41:3,33 44:26	5:21,31 6:1,27	Monday 1:16 2:1 6:34	78:8 86:14	22:4,23 24:32	occupied 16:7
45:13 48:26 57:9	11:17 13:31	Morough 62:31	new 9:18,19 21:17	25:15,32 27:21	occur 25:20 69:17
60:5,7,9 61:14	14:21,25,27	63:2,21 66:29	23:33 25:34 28:2	38:28 41:4,13,29	83:33
73:1,24 77:10	15:10,11,28	MosArt 7:14	38:31 39:8,22	43:8 44:28	occurred 9:22 72:23
83:14 86:29	18:2,18 19:19	Municipal	41:13,14,17,22,25	45:10,11 49:13	75:28
money 17:11 31:13	20:1,17 21:16	18:11,12,24,33	42:22,25	62:18,29 65:34	occurrences 73:33
33:4,23 34:17,19	22:23 23:27 24:6	19:2,10 23:24	45:6,13,31,32	66:21	occurs 72:14
35:18 42:26	28:10 29:23	30:9 32:33 33:1,3	47:26,27 50:27	68:18,19,22,25	off 5:6,8 8:27 11:28
47:1,2,4 50:15	30:14,15 32:33	35:5,29,30,31,33	52:1 63:14 66:14	69:7 74:30	13:3 17:24 19:16
53:3 55:3	35:12 38:15,22,23	39:16 58:19 62:19	71:23,30 74:34	75:24,28,29 76:7	36:16 40:13 42:18
60:26,27	40:9,11 47:34	74:32 76:3 78:16	75:14,28 87:32	79:13 80:7,	46:13 48:33 50:29
monies 16:14 47:28	48:32 51:16 53:32	87:29	news 9:8 17:23 31:12	numbering 13:25	52:25 53:13,23,27
56:2	54:8,31 55:16	MULLEN 3:12,13	36:33 43:1 63:15	numbers 43:16 52:22	56:24,26 60:26
monitor 83:26,30	62:15 63:4,7,32	5:16,17 15:32,33	next 16:8 19:9,12	64:21	63:20 73:5 79:15
month 14:3 17:22	64:23 65:8 66:17	20:20 68:24	22:5 24:32 28:25	numerous 41:21	offer 4:8,10,11,25
19:4 34:30 35:21	68:14 71:26 73:25	73:29,30 80:25,26	34:30 36:24	N11 75:11,14	5:27 42:24
60:11 65:12 70:18	74	MURPHY 3:14,15	39:9,29 48:30	76:22,32,33	offering 80:27
84:7	multifaceted 85:3	8:18,20 47:29,30	76:8,9 87:5	N81 39:22	office 30:10 40:20
monthly 13:34 22:21	multinationals 50:30	55:19 70:29,31,32	nice 40:12 87:33	National 5:20 17:8	54:23 86:15
months 24:19,22	multiple 65:25	71:5,6 78:13	night 6:28 15:27	24:1 26:32 50:1	officer 15:12 33:8
25:13 27:21 40:30	multitude 73:6	79:3,4,21,32	49:20 61:12 62:34	51:15,20 57:19,20	37:23 78:28
41:10,13 66:6,11	murdered 4:12	80:4,5,6 81:11,12	nine 69:3 83:20,21	73:32 78:21	82:2,7,12,13,15,1
71:7	music 48:11	87:9,10,12,13,14,	nobody 51:4	Nationalist 6:17	6 83:11,25,26
mooted 62:22	must 64:24,28	15	noises 66:30	Natura 31:9 32:16	officers 82:9,10
more 6:31 12:28	mutual 15:3	N	nominate 11:14	Newrath 7:5,13,20	officials 25:8,15,17
14:25,27 15:25	myself 8:3 15:5 44:21	name 11:12 55:15	none 14:10 37:31	Newtown 42:21	26:18 49:28 50:23
16:17 18:34 19:14	46:15 48:4 59:15	68:22 69:7 74:30	normally 34:13 49:22	43:23,24,25 63:18	60:23 64:31
21:30 22:11 31:13	64:2 75:31	78:13 80:8 81:32	north 30:11 32:14	65:32,33	offset 10:4
32:12 35:12	M11 75:11,14	nationally 57:33 85:8	34:32 35:6 49:4	Newtownmountkenn	often 5:7 26:9
37:3,17,20,31	Main 10:5 52:13,34	nationwide 67:23	50:29	edy 43:8 63:17	old 4:3 27:12 29:17
38:15 43:3 44:5	76:24 82:25 85:16	native 4:13	not	Niamh 1:33	56:22,28 60:13
46:2 50:9 56:5,8	Malone 4:30	natural 35:13,14	11:1,15,24,29,32,	NICHOLSON 18:26	61:29 62:25 85:14
57:4,25 58:25	Manley 5:33,34	nature 19:17 23:27	34 12:11 14:28	22:20 33:9 46:9	older 44:32 47:26
62:2 63:12,13	Manor 29:15 50:18	47:8	15:8 16:32	55:1 56:15 68:9	oldest 77:22
64:2,11 65:10,31	Marc 35:1,2,16 57:12	near 39:33 67:26	17:6,8,27 20:2,9	NIS 35:26	once 40:6 44:5 65:21
66:15,34 71:18,23	March 32:31 40:25	nearing 33:20	21:6,7,31	Noeleen 27:19	one 6:29 7:6,14,22
72:30 73:22	69:8 80:9	nearly 18:16	22:27,32 23:5	Notwithstanding 34:5	14:10 15:24,25
74:16,22 77:18	Margaret 4:33	necessarily 22:32	24:21,24	Now 6:12 8:19 10:24	16:10 17:27,28
78:1 83:32	Marlton 46:24	58:6	25:16,25,33	11:1,12 12:33	19:4 21:24 22:5
84:4,16 86:5	Martin 80:10	necessary 70:22 75:5	26:5,22 29:12,19	13:21,22 15:13,30	24:32 26:21
morning 18:16 26:18	Mary 3:4 7:30 62:9	76:6 78:33	30:30 31:11,19,31	16:25 17:8,26,29	27:6 19:33 28:34
60:25 61:12,28	72:12 78:28 81:32	neck 86:32	32:18,25 33:22	18:30 19:5,15	29:11 30:19
most 10:11,19	83:8,9	need 10:25 13:6	36:29	20:9 21:14	32:22,31 33:9,20
15:11,17 27:4	Maura 7:31	16:28 18:22,34	37:2,8,10,21,28,3	22:15,24,33	34:14 39:8,29
33:10,19	Maureen 5:14	19:5 20:9,14	2 38:6,13,21	24:22,23,27 25:31	40:6 45:7,10
34:6,8,23 35:10	Mayo 82:10	24:29 30:27,28	39:19,26 40:22	26:8,18,20,22	46:27,34 48:27
36:27 37:1 46:1	MBIVR 1:33	36:2 37:2,4	41:5,33 42:19	30:17,27 36:8	49:27,31 50:29
50:10 53:1 65:17	McCormack 4:25 7:13	39:22,26 40:1,5	43:14,27	37:28,30 38:3,22	52:13 53:1 54:28
69:17,18 71:8	McDermott 50:16	42:26 43:3 45:2	44:5,6,19,29,33	40:12,28 41:15	57:10 59:17 61:33
73:33 74:21,23	McDonald 7:30,31	47:10 49:29	47:2,2	50:7 52:2 53:34	62:30 64:18
mostly 76:23	McManus 27:19	50:11,12 51:5,21	notch 48:5	58:30 60:34	65:13,25 66:11
mother 5:13 49:17	MD's 17:30	53:6 56:8 57:3	note 8:16,22 9:14,32	61:10,11 63:18	68:2,29 72:16
motherly 58:23	MDs 33:32 34:12	62:6 64:31	15:26 23:16	64:8,9,19 65:32	ones 17:7 48:25 79:9
motion 20:4 31:26	68:13 82:34 83:2	71:18,20,32 73:34	28:25,28 31:9	66:14 68:5,2	ongoing 10:12 11:26
36:1 39:28	Melanie 2:20 74:31	74:7,16 75:34	32:3 35:16 69:2	NOAC 13:23	45:22 54:20
68:22,28 69:7	Men's 16:5	76:1,5,25,33 78:3	86:23 87:5	NPWS 73:32	only 5:10 14:28
70:2,15,17,22,26,	Merlin 30:10	79:9 81:7,9,13,15	noted 66:21 73:27	NTA 27:6 31:18	17:11,27 19:10
30 71:4,6,27	MEPs 48:17	83:16,27 84:3,22	88:18	36:4,10 38:5,10	25:32 26:22 29:30
73:1,30	Michael 5:13 18:25	85:15,21	notes 10:8 37:19	40:30,33 41:7,8	31:12 38:11
74:7,10,11,30	32:5,6,12	needed 14:31 20:32	nothing 17:28 41:6	66:22 76:4	40:4,22 41:2
75:23 77:26,28	45:28,29 46:7	34:3,5 79:22	58:8 60:17	O	49:13,27
78:13	48:10 55:32 56:13	80:12 85:3	notice 7:7,15,23,32	o'clock 18:16 33:7,8	50:6,20,30 57:8
80:7,8,21,26,32,3	Mick 3:22 66:4	needing 79:26	12:32 13:24 40:5	obey 50:25	59:14 61:16
4 81:28,32,34	Minister's 81:21	needs 17:8,17 19:10	44:25 67:4,6	objection 70:30	63:1,5 64:1,18
82:3 84:28,33	Minister 8:32 25:10	20:14 29:5 39:21	68:20,22,28 69:7	objections 70:28 75:6	65:25 66:6 68:7
85:4,24	27:1,6 31:18	40:1,8 53:19 57:4	70:22 71:10 74:30	objective 32:22	71:7 77:3 79:34
motioned 70:3	36:4,10 39:23	64:30 71:22 73:31	78:13 80:7 81:32	objectives 31:31	81:16 86:33 88:4
motions 11:23 68:20	50:28 80:9,10	75:4 76:31 80:28	noticeable 29:14,22	objects 82:25	onto 67:15 72:31
motorcycles 83:21	84:25 85:26	negative 52:27 77:10	noticed 6:23	observation 14:24	73:21 75:25
mountain 70:13 71:19	Ministers 80:22 81:30	neighbour 4:9 5:29	notices 50:31	obvious 20:7 22:28	onus 78:25
move 9:19 37:5 43:6	Minute's 6:2,3	neighbours 30:24	notified 79:2	obviously 6:5	open 10:27 13:27
58:34 59:22 66:34	Miriam 3:14 8:18	44:13	noting 9:26	12:16,17,19,20	20:30 39:9 49:27
68:19 77:33	47:29 78:13 81:11	net 8:23,27 9:27,31	nourishment	17:5 22:27 31:24	53:11,20 69:19
moved 35:14 60:29	87:9,14	10:5,25 13:7	35:6,8,15	33:33 43:13 64:1	opener 51:30
movements 75:10	Mitchell 3:10,11	netting 22:15	number 4:18,22 6:33	68:14 76:22 84:34	opening 15:30 58:10
	19:20,21 20:27	networking 34:29	7:4,12,19,27,28	occasion 6:7,24 15:13	operate 32:10
	21:11 74:18,19		8:3,8,9,21,33	72:18	operation 19:15 83:2

operator 76:34	40:1,5,32 41:2,11	66:18 67:20	parties 50:2 51:4	51:12 58:21	playground 69:29
opinion 26:4 37:8	43:7,22 44:6,18	78:4,7	partners 76:5	59:17,31 63:26	74:7
42:22	45:13,26 49:16,34	O'Leary 7:14	partnership 23:18	71:8 78:25 79:27	playgrounds 69:10
opponent 5:8	50:14,15,21,26	O'Malley 1:47	parts 38:33 65:23	personal 14:25	73:3,6 74:21
opportunities 38:18	51:6 52:19 53:2	O'Neill 3:20,21	66:32	personally 14:8 29:26	pled 61:8
opportunity 8:16	58:2,1	5:26,27 43:26,28	party 27:1 39:23 43:9	42:8 72:5,15	please 2:8 13:26
26:11,14 28:14	outages 54:20,22	58:16,17,24	49:33 59:5	persons 44:32	32:17 42:2 46:8
34:28 35:26 40:19	outcome 32:1 35:25	59:11,13 60:22	65:24,28	petition 62:13	51:1 83:9 84:27
77:11 86:2,4,22	55:21	61:6,8,21,23,25,2	pass 15:13 20:18	phone 16:4 61:11	pleased 9:1,14 17:32
87:2	outcomes 82:29	6 62:7,8 63:29	25:12 46:7 56:13	phones 74:4	36:33 56:29 70:1
opposition 50:2 51:7	outdated 76:13	66:21	passed 4:30 6:19 26:2	photographs 51:3	pleasure 27:32 48:34
option 22:3	outdoor 4:18 5:18	66:21	31:26 70:3 82:3	84:9	62:14
options 35:21,26	49:6 68:32 73:23	Oak 7:5	passengers 83:20	photos 18:17	pleasures 4:32
46:14	outdoors 56:23	Okay 2:3 6:1,6 11:18	84:10	pick 34:14 42:23	plenty 28:9 58:22,26
order 6:6 7:30 36:1	outgoing 88:12	12:32 13:4,5,32	passion 49:15	44:20 74:20	plotting 65:5
65:10 80:15	outline 69:11	15:30 21:22 22:5	passionate 17:34 28:2	picked 34:14 36:20	ploy 43:21
orders 11:23,26 12:6	outlined 9:12,23,31	27:29 32:18 47:13	passionately 19:9	picking 5:7 56:24	pluck 64:29
ordinary 1:3 6:33	10:5,7 70:13 77:8	54:10 57:16 61:25	past 10:9 19:5,28	picture 24:27 30:33	point 12:1 17:30
27:26 51:17	outs 30:2 63:34	69:6 72:12 76:28	41:13 73:12	42:33 43:3	18:19 20:13 23:3
59:18,31 72:20	outside 20:6 50:12	77:27 78:11	pastime 44:2	pictures 64:25	24:3,32 30:22
organisation 26:8	73:28	80:5,7 81:29	patch 66:11	piece 19:27 46:10,13	31:32 35:11 36:1
30:20 48:8	over 2:4 4:4,9 5:2,4	85:23 87:6	path 20:1	65:4	42:29 43:18 45:30
organisations 27:12	8:5	88:14,15	paths 69:20	piecemeal 21:15	57:10 61:9,21,27
30:20 31:6	14:1,16,23,32,34	OPW 30:12 34:33	patient 54:3	46:12 56:31	62:30 65:10 68:17
organise 35:5 61:16	17:9,13,24	57:8	patients 84:2	piecemealing 56:23	72:32 74:14
62:13	19:29,31 20:18	Ovington 30:10	pay 14:5 15:22	pieces 28:13 46:27	77:6,18 80:30,31
organised 77:14 84:8	21:32 23:25	P	23:24,28 25:16	pilot 82:12 85:6	87:1
original 6:25 11:25	24:4,9,10,19,21,3	pace 42:24 64:20	52:25,26 53:3	pilots 85:6	pointed 85:1
originally 4:25 35:9	2 26:13 27:10	pack 39:17	57:32 58:3 64:24	pinpointed 29:5	points 24:17 26:32
62:22	29:27 30:22,27	packing 59:3	87:15	pitch 39:8 56:21,28	42:11 58:34 71:28
other 10:4 11:17,24	31:2,15	paedophiles 65:19	payers 45:14 57:23	itches 46:11	74:10,33 82:33
18:28 20:24 21:27	40:16,20,22 41:13	pages 9:23 10:5,8	58:3	place 6:10 13:3	policies 48:7
24:3,10 25:15	42:12,15 43:8	13:25	paying 24:8 27:31	20:9,14 30:30	policing 66:15 84:33
27:2 30:24 31:5	46:4,7 48:23,34	paid 15:33 24:14	47:28	46:4 49:7 53:19	85:2
32:34 35:29,30	49:11,29	47:28	paint 57:4	56:7 57:14 58:22	policy 25:12,13,31
36:22,34 38:8	53:2,10,11,21	paint 57:4	pair 39:17	61:10 64:14 67:9	26:12,20,23,24,25
39:18,30 41:15	54:6 56:5 58:27	parade 15:20	parcel 46:27	69:15 73:34 80:15	27:1 28:2 31:27
43:21 48:12 55:9	59:15 60:1,29	parents 61:16	parents 61:16	places 73:2,19	43:10,15 46:2
56:26,27 57:23	61:10 62:5,15	park 7:5,22 18:16	38:1 83:20 84:4	74:20,24 81:26	50:1 51:15 66:15
61:3,34 62:23	63:9,2	28:16 29:16 33:10	pedestrian 19:26 20:1	plan 11:25 16:2 17:16	74:23 79:16 83:14
63:9 11 65:23	overall 9:1,6 31:20	40:1,5	pedestrians 30:30	18:31 19:8,30	political 49:32 50:2
66:32 68:13 69:16	46:18 56:24,30	47:18,20,21 56:23	38:1 83:20 84:4	23:17 25:4,5	politicians 51:20
70:32 73:31 75:31	57:32 72:1 83:19	60:28,31 63:18	pending 35:32 36:30	28:22 29:7,21	politics 48:30 87:31
76:3,15 77:12,34	overarching 31:27	73:32	penetrate 85:15	31:26,28,31,34	polling
78:23,27 82:15,22	overkill 71:29	parked 21:8 33:13	penetrating 85:14	41:30,32 42:13	78:15,19,22,29,31
83:32 84:20	oversee 82:26	46:3	pension 54:24	45:23,25	,32 79:2,33 80:3
others 5:10 16:11	overseeing 12:4	parking 18:14,18	people 4:29 10:33	46:13,14,16,17,18	pollution 73:13
37:31 64:5 65:27	overshadowed 36:21	21:4,6 24:4	14:20 16:26	17:7,10,21 49:33	poontons 52:1
69:15 72:7 87:3	overview 8:26	33:9,10,16,17	17:7,10,21 49:33	22:31 24:4	poo 74:16
our 5:2,32,33	own 4:12 21:7,18	42:32,34 45:31,34	50:27 53:20 54:34	25:2,12	pool 46:11 53:18
6:5,13,21	25:29 32:23,34	46:1,12 52:17	56:24,27,30 57:13	26:8,29,33	poor 56:11
9:6,7,11,15 11:30	38:5 39:19 43:2,7	parkland 69:19	62:20 63:2 67:11	27:1,3,4,9,13,26	popular 62:12
12:16,24 15:5,34	46:24 49:5,32	parklands 72:28	68:32 74:34 75:14	29:6,15,22	population 18:34
16:3 18:25	50:12 51:6 54:29	parks 20:14 69:9,29	77:11,21,22,23	30:28,32 33:16	68:14 70:7
20:22,29 21:5,18	55:11,15 56:10	70:23 73:3	82:20,26,28,29,30	34:28 35:7 36:11	portion 22:13
22:18 23:19,29	59:26,33 60:31	part 6:21 13:6,11 19:7	37:4,5,15,20,21,3	37:4,5,15,20,21,3	position 9:2 12:6
24:11,34	62:19,25	20:8,15 24:1	3 38:34 39:34	41:4 42:27	13:29 22:19 49:12
25:5,12,25	65:24,28,30 73:3	26:2,3,12,19	41:4 42:27	43:2,24 46:11	67:24
26:12,18,20 28:3	86:1	31:27 34:3,7	47:14	47:14	positive 9:8 17:23
29:19 30:24 31:33	owned 69:29	35:14 40:8 41:6	48:9,11,18,19,22,	29 49:3,4	18:6 19:3,4 36:27
32:23,34 33:30	owners 67:8	43:1 45:8,18 52:5	50:4,8,11,14,19,2	50:4,8,11,14,19,2	57:26,27,29 69:23
34:17 36:10	ownership 22:23	55:5 57:32 58:26	1 51:5,17,3	1 51:5,17,3	possibility 30:12
38:9,26 39:16,22	51:21 77:17	59:27 62:32,34	55:5 57:32 58:26	55:5 57:32 58:26	37:22
40:1,8,14,15,24,2	O'Brien 3:16,17,18,19	64:15 68:32 73:24	59:27 62:32,34	59:27 62:32,34	possible 15:26 16:29
5 41:10,21,22,34	4:6,7 7:10 13:31	82:8,10 83:11	64:15 68:32 73:24	64:15 68:32 73:24	23:5 35:12 57:22
42:30 43:4 44:32	16:30,31 19:1	participate 78:20	82:8,10 83:11	82:8,10 83:11	77:12 80:3
45:	20:13,26 23:16	participating 83:3	part 6:21 13:6,11 19:7	part 6:21 13:6,11 19:7	possibly 20:3 22:27
ours 77:22	63:33,34 65:8,9	particular 4:31 11:3	20:8,15 24:1	20:8,15 24:1	42:32 50:19 58:10
ourselves 32:29 34:11	68:23,24 70:34	14:16 16:1 18:10	26:2,3,12,19	26:2,3,12,19	post 54:23
47:6	71:1,18 72:26	24:11 25:12,16	31:27 34:3,7	31:27 34:3,7	postal 79:10,11
out 11:12,24 13:1	73:1 74:14	27:17 34:14 42:12	35:14 40:8 41:6	35:14 40:8 41:6	posted 56:32 65:21
15:1 16:21 17:26	77:4,5,25 80:10	43:18 46:19	43:1 45:8,18 52:5	43:1 45:8,18 52:5	poster 86:34
19:6,15,27	O'Connor 3:20 7:1	57:27,28,31	55:5 57:32 58:26	55:5 57:32 58:26	posters 51:18
21:7,13 22:15,17	8:18 69:8 70:3	58:1,8 66:31	59:27 62:32,34	59:27 62:32,34	potential 45:6
23:10 24:2,27	71:25,26 72:2,5	73:31 86:2	64:15 68:32 73:24	64:15 68:32 73:24	potentially 31:33
25:32 27:1 28:28	86:20	particularly 16:11	82:8,10 83:11	82:8,10 83:11	powers 12:25 25:1
29:2,18,31	O'GORMAN 11:20	20:22 27:9 29:14	part 6:21 13:6,11 19:7	part 6:21 13:6,11 19:7	33:16 58:6
30:4,24 31:1,7,11	14:2 20:19 22:7	37:32 38:5 43:23	20:8,15 24:1	20:8,15 24:1	practice 8:31 12:15
32:33 35:19	23:9,14 31:16	45:9,31 56:27	26:2,3,12,19	26:2,3,12,19	82:31
36:3,30 38:33	33:6 44:16 45:30	66:29 70:17 81:1	31:27 34:3,7	31:27 34:3,7	pray 5:22
39:2,21,24,30,34	55:18 57:6,17		35:14 40:8 41:6	35:14 40:8 41:6	pre 10:21

rep 79:24	responsible 66:26	rolled 52:19 53:2	36:34 40:12 42:14	second 13:11,31	services 9:34 44:29,32
repair 56:11	74:2 84:10	82:14 85:7	43:23 45:27 48:9	16:21 17:22	61:18 75:6,7 83:3
replacement 47:25	rest 15:19 39:22 42:9	roof 48:23	52:22 55:9 57:27	26:3,18 28:20	servicing 78:22
replaces 39:21 40:7	49:18 55:22 56:31	room 8:6,15 41:5	58:9,19 59:5,10	30:27 34:32 36:12	servicing 39:17
reply 44:23 45:5 61:3	resultant 38:16	60:15 65:3 73:32	63:3,30 65:29	55:9 65:10 71:26	set 11:24 49:15 58:1
replying 82:34	resulted 6:16 10:10	rooms 78:33	68:11 70:22 72:26	74:14 85:29	67:13 69:4 75:5
report 9:1,12 10:6,30	retaining 38:14	ropes 16:1	73:1 74:2	secondary 63:19	82:28
12:20 13:16,19,34	retire 38:27 39:18	round 5:5 20:32 57:2	76:13,16,29 81:26	78:32	setting 41:14
14:2 15:31	retirement 14:18	route 16:25,27,29	84:12 85:13	seconded	settled 51:18
16:10,33 17:5	15:25 16:5 17:1	22:4,11,26,30	same 14:13 19:26	7:1,9,16,24,34	seven 20:4
19:25 23:20,33	19:23 24:9 28:7	23:3,8 27:3 41:1,2	24:28 44:22 46:16	8:13,14 13:10,13	several 46:14 76:16
24:17,18 27:31	29:26 42:9 47:31	44:30	60:1,24,28,29	36:13 68:23,24	severely 26:34
28:12,16,29	48:1 49:16,20	routes 56:5 76:23	68:16 77:28 78:26	69:8 78:14 80:8	sewage 52:2
29:4,8,25,29	51:31 58:18,31	row 51:5	satisfaction 87:25	81:33	sewerage 51:1
31:30 32:2,6,16	62:11 63:25 64:16	rule 6:20 60:14,32	satisfying 18:15	second 7:16 10:25	61:27,29
34:29 40:28 51:26	retiring 14:6,7 15:4	ruled 31:6	saved 14:30	13:6,26,28 36:2,5	shabby 57:3,4
52:12 56:18 64:9	87:20	rules 81:4	saw 52:6	74:11	shall 25:19,23,25
66:3 67:29,33	return 15:11 37:32	rumours 65:22	say 6:8 14:13,19	seconding 70:3	share 12:29 25:29
75:19 79:1,6,17	48:9	run 35:16 46:20 51:1	15:34 20:2,27	secret 15:16	66:24 82:11
82:29	returning 38:21 78:28	60:5 67:24	21:15 25:3	section 6:23 8:23 9:26	shareholding 12:12
reports 56:15	returns 8:15	69:4,26,31 72:29	26:4,11,19 27:34	13:17 49:5 51:3	shares 11:14
representations 29:6	revaluation 10:19	76:24	34:30 35:3,30	58:4 70:12	sharing 34:29
representative 27:20	revenue 9:4,5,6,7,28	running 15:3 45:14	36:3 38:34 39:34	sector 80:16	she's 49:3 58:25
51:7	review 9:24 10:5,7	56:22 81:16	40:14 44:9,17	see 6:18,21 15:25,26	she 4:26 14:9 15:34
representatives	27:19 30:17,21	86:28,30 88:9	48:3,13,26,27,33	16:7 19:4 20:32	16:1,3,4
25:2,12 30:9 44:2	32:32 34:27 75:15	runs 50:16	49:17,22,33 50:20	21:25 26:2,18	23:25,28,29 24:10
67:14 82:24	reviewed 79:16	rural 16:14,15 20:22	51:12,26 55:9,34	28:31,32 29:7	26:29 28:1
represented 67:16	revisit 35:26	23:29,31 40:15	57:26 58:21 59:17	30:1,6 33:13 34:8	36:16,20,21,22
reps 44:5	rid 26:12	54:24,28,30,32	60:27 61:33	35:21,25,26	38:28,30 40:19,22
requested 10:6	ride 40:2,5	55:5,10,11,14	62:18,29 63:29,31	37:18,21,23 41:24	49:1,7
requests 46:11,26	47:18,20,21	56:4,5 79:8 83:34	64:2,9,22 65:1,14	42:33 43:31 45:33	51:30,31,33
79:1	right 37:3,4 42:21	84:1 85:2 86:5	66:12 67:11 68:4	46:2 47:28	58:20,21,22,26,27
require 32:2 68:16	43:21 44:11 54:5	R93 7:6	73:19,26 76:21 7	49:16,19,30 50:15	68:26 72:22,23,24
required 12:5 14:31	57:3	Ramps 78:32	saying 16:32 17:20,33	51:17 52:1	73:28 78:29 83:11
22:16 32:20 33:5	59:9,11,18,20	Rates 8:34 9:14	24:21 26:25 28:17	53:2,14,24,27,29	85:13
35:7 63:14 64:33	60:7,33 65:17	10:13,19	32:29 43:32 49:13	54:6 58:28	shed 16:5 38:12
69:31 78:32 80:13	71:33 79:9,10	52:20,25,26,31	71:11,18,27 78:1	59:26,34 60:8	sheep 69:17
83:5,6,29	81:1 87:20	53:3 57:32 58:3,5	88:13	62:20,21,29 63:10	sheets 86:31
requirements 10:14	rightly 21:15	Rathdown 76:4	says 66:9 71:3	66:10 68:15	shelf 29:8 65:4
rerouting 22:34	ringing 61:12	Rathdrum 46:24	scale 64:20	71:10,13,33	shift 75:6
research 12:10	rip 37:16,19 79:15	Rather 29:8 39:34	scandal 60:18	seeing 16:7 63:14	shock 5:2
resent 59:19	ripped 51:15	43:12 46:12 51:22	scariest 59:27	53:2,14,24,27,29	shocked 71:11
reserve 12:2 54:31	ripples 51:20	74:5 76:34 82:4	scaring 65:21 72:26	54:6 58:28	shoes 14:17 40:8
reserves 10:11	riptides 47:15	Rathnew 7:5,13,20,21	scattered 76:30	59:26,34 60:8	64:3,6
reservoir 51:2	rise 87:32	42:21	scene 43:25 44:9	62:20,21,29 63:10	shopping 29:16
resident 18:17 30:19	risk 69:11,30 70:6,14	RDF 45:7	51:32	66:10 68:15	shored 38:3
55:27	71:3 73:4,7	Recruitment 57:9	scenery 52:3	71:10,13,33	short 8:26 18:5
residential 25:19,23	river 30:22,27	69:3	scenes 43:7 50:19	41:34 44:30 50:6	22:8,11 37:30
37:4,9	73:12,13	Reggie 5:13	schedule 20:10	60:17 66:13	49:26 62:23 67:5
residents 18:13,21	road 7:28 17:26	Regional 69:2	41:34 44:30 50:6	seek 20:21 75:13	80:11,14,28
25:28 27:14 30:19	18:10,18,19	Regrettably 75:11	60:17 66:13	seekers 81:2,3	shortly 33:13 66:9
31:5 37:1,6 75:30	19:26,29,32,34	Rehills 24:20 32:18	50:1,28 60:18	seeking 35:19 43:17	82:15
76:17 77:14	20:5,6,7	Remember 4:29,30	71:7,12	86:22	shots 59:29
resolution 8:22	21:1,8,11,14,17,1	30:17 36:20 46:33	57:18,21,27,29	seem 15:1 16:15	should 9:20 17:33
resolutions 6:19 8:27	25:13 27:2	65:25	58:1,9,10	18:15 34:25 40:6	25:27 26:1,9
resolve 22:23	29:12,15 31:19,20	Restart 57:26	68:5,9,12 73:23	41:34 66:14	32:34 33:12,16
resourced 64:13	32:31 35:27 37:6	Rivendell 4:26	75:11,12,20 78:31	49:28	35:27 38:13 43:33
resources 19:14 21:18	39:6,9 41:5	RMR 1:33	82:12,14	seems 18:20 20:11	48:20 55:11 58:10
56:7 83:30 85:2	42:18,31	Rory 3:20 7:1 8:18	scheme 38:15	41:34 44:30 50:6	61:30 62:13
respect 8:27 10:9	44:10,11,12 54:31	69:8 71:25 86:20	45:6,7,9,12 47:27	60:17 66:13	65:2,26 66:15
14:26,32 15:3	44:10,11,12 54:31	Roundwood 4:31 5:23	85:7	seen 5:7 36:29 40:31	67:25 69:10,31
37:26 65:30 66:1	61:19 66:11 76:27	RSA 83:26	school 5:24 54:21	50:1,28 60:18	71:30 72:5,25
78:30 79:2 86:10	82:1,2,7,8,9,11,13	RSI 83:25	61:15 63:19 77:1	71:7,12	74:1 76:21 77:25
respectable 87:27	,15,16,17,18,19,2	RTÉ 71:7	78:8 83:2,3,4 84:3	seemingly 22:4	78:25 81:5,18,23
respectful 51:31 52:9	0,21,23,24,25,26,	Russel 15:19	schemes 38:15	self 44:4 80:20	82:15
87:27	27,28,29,30,32	Ryan 3:22,23 13:1	45:6,7,9,12 47:27	send 13:25 33:1,14	shouldn't 20:7 36:2
respective 56:17	roads 9:33	39:23 66:4,5 67:1	85:7	56:17	74:19
respond 26:5 38:22	16:13,15,18	S	scope 56:28	sending 34:15 72:8	shout 63:34
41:5	20:8,22 29:14,19	sad 4:17 5:25 44:2	scourge 26:12	73:9	show 16:8 34:2 86:6
responder 16:3	54:28,30,32	48:24 59:21 87:20	scrapped 24:21	sends 50:25	showed 16:6
response 16:24 18:1	56:4,6,11 60:19	sadly 4:27	scratch 63:9	senior 14:6 26:8 28:4	shown 14:32 23:25
33:19 34:11,22	83:34	sadness 5:2	screened 27:17	49:28	shut 59:8 80:31
37:28 38:10 41:11	84:1,5,16,17	safe 21:7 22:13 37:19	screening 31:7	sense 39:25 65:34	side 18:12,27,31
44:18 55:34 57:27	rock 22:13,14 35:7,8	82:19 87:4	seafrost 37:14,15	sensible 74:8	21:27 22:12,20,22
63:30 68:28 69:13	role 14:9,24,28 15:16	safely 37:34	44:25	sentiments 18:3	41:5 53:10 76:15
70:21 74:1 80:5	51:34 82:7,8,15	said 12:23 14:24	seamless 67:26	separately 12:31	84:20
82:4	roles 86:18	15:30 22:21 24:10	seaside 69:21	serious 58:27 59:24	sides 21:26
responses 22:18	roll 2:10 8:17	25:10,11 26:8	seats 6:16 87:3,34	78:2	
responsibility 78:29		27:18 30:16 34:33		78:2	

sign 6:33 37:21	social 16:28 17:24	speed 83:29 85:18	step 15:25 64:5	65:25 69:10,30,31	Safety 9:33 29:16
signage 37:13	24:20,30 25:24	speeding 85:16	stepped 55:26	72:17 75:30 83:27	37:7,12,23 53:23
69:9,10,31 70:23	29:1 38:18 65:22	speeds 84:5	stepping 50:7	84:3	76:15 79:1
71:22 72:28,31	79:13 83:6	spend 15:19 21:18	steps 12:4 69:11	sudden 5:3	82:2,7,9,11,13,15,
73:5,12,15,19,20,	society 44:13	33:23 34:13 47:4	stewardship 39:5,14	suddenly 5:23	16,17,18,20,21,23
21 74:5 83:28	sold 25:22 26:24	spending 17:10 24:31	stick 64:30	sufficient 68:11	,24,25,26,27,28,2
signal 50:26	solely 29:12	spends 10:4	sticker 33:11	suggest 73:8	9,30,32,33
signed 79:12	solicitor 25:20	spent 49:1,18 50:26	sticks 80:2	suggested 74:11,20	83:4,5,7,11,14,15,
significance 39:25	solid 71:28	spoke 38:30 42:30	still 11:8,12,21,26	suggesting 72:2	25,26 84:8
significant 9:22	solution 20:33	57:33 85:20	12:3 17:13 23:4	suggestion 68:12	Saturday 5:2 6:12
10:12,19 11:32	solutions 22:9,11	spoken 38:26 80:27	26:24 28:17 29:17	suits 20:33	16:5
12:20 18:14,20	51:22 52:8	sport 46:25	31:25 32:27	summary 28:22	Saunders 39:10
21:18 32:2 44:22	solve 22:33 23:6	sporting 5:5 17:10,15	34:33,34 36:27	summertime 28:32	Save 27:13 30:20
45:1 55:21	43:13 44:29	20:26,29 29:5	37:8 40:32 41:32	summits 65:3	Science 7:20
57:3,23 85:1	solved 49:34	33:34 41:31	45:22 54:20,21	sunshine 47:34	Scott 3:24 8:19
significantly 9:16	some 2:19 6:15 9:22	sports 20:14,15,33	72:22 87:13,14	supermarkets 52:17	27:27,30 32:5
18:33 27:4 39:6	10:11 12:10	23:15,18 33:32	88:6	superseded 11:25	33:21 34:21
45:15 75:27	16:13,18,22	65:2	stone 65:29	supplement 66:28	67:28,30,32
signs 22:28,30 37:18	19:15,17 23:6	spot 30:23 31:12	stones 79:7	supplies 84:19	72:33,34 74:15
46:8 47:14,16	25:29 28:15 30:5	33:10	stood 43:24	supplying 34:26	Sea 23:7 84:19
71:2,19,20,28	31:2 32:25,27	spots 24:4 33:9,17	stop 43:32 47:18,20	support 6:20 14:9	Seapoint 27:15
73:2 84:3	33:20,24,28 36:34	83:28	60:33,34 74:15	23:25 29:27	30:19,23,30 31:5
silence 6:2,3	37:13,16,17,18,23	spread 34:22 40:15	stopping 63:12	37:8,10,13 43:26	37:6
similar 19:1 20:31	,31 39:11 52:6,31	70:9	stops 60:33	51:6 52:20,29	Seaview 56:20,25,30
46:24 70:3	54:22 57:1 59:1	square 7:4,12,19 8:8	stories 48:21	70:17	Secondly 11:6 24:3,34
simple 4:32 41:16	60:21 61:4,30	stabilisation 22:13	storm 66:33	73:1,7,11,30	54:19
71:22	66:9 74:23 77:24	staff 15:17 23:18	story 17:23 36:29	79:20	Sent 18:17 28:22,28
simply 17:11	81:13 82:8,11	38:9,12,14 39:7	43:1 46:24	80:12,26,32,34	47:33 56:16 82:3
since 11:25 16:23	83:32 84:2	40:20 45:26	strange 38:34	84:27,33 85:4,9	85:26
18:13 19:33 39:28	85:20,32 86:11,31	49:5,6 55:7	strategy 82:17,27	87:23 88:2	September 62:22 68:5
63:5,25 65:13	87:18,27	57:9,14 58:12	straw 50:3	supported 15:17 20:5	86:21 88:11
66:27 75:27 84:16	somebody 5:6 18:5	64:4 67:3,4 79:25	street 7:29,31	43:22 50:2 79:17	Shady 69:18
sincere 4:13 86:15,23	28:4 48:10 49:15	86:12 88:1	52:13,33 53:1,4,5	81:33	Shankill 75:25
88:1	79:27 83:16,34	staffing 38:10	76:24 85:16,17	supporting 43:24	Shay 2:24 4:28 7:1,16
sincerely 44:18,22	someone 64:22 86:6	stage 2:20 21:23	87:32	50:11 71:4,6,14	42:3 49:32
59:13 86:2 87:19	something 13:2 15:25	23:4,20 32:22	streets 41:22,25	supportive 37:1 47:32	59:2,21 65:11
sincerity 39:1	17:16,30,34 18:24	43:1 52:30 62:13	streetscape 41:17	supports 41:10,12	71:15 86:19
sinister 43:21	22:5 24:23 29:21	stages 19:29,30 69:2	45:6,7	45:6	Shillelagh 16:22 20:24
sink 86:34	33:11 37:12,33	stakeholders 73:31	stretch 21:19	suppose 5:2,8	22:2
sister 5:13	38:8 41:16,26,31	82:19,23	striking 17:8	11:20,26,34 12:19	Shocking 16:18 43:7
sit 76:8	43:16 54:31 55:9	stalled 16:26	stripes 15:12	14:4 23:20,28	54:30 78:8
site 11:28 12:5 21:10	56:28 64:14 67:25	stand 26:5,29	stroog 9:2 14:11	28:30 29:7 30:20	Shop 29:17 41:17
23:12 24:23,29,30	71:3,32 72:27	31:25,31 32:2	strongest 65:13	31:9,30 37:14,30	45:6,8
25:14 27:17 34:27	74:20 75:31 76:1	51:7 55:10	strongly 48:16 71:6	39:20 40:4	Sillery 4:9
46:17,18,19	79:29 80:27,29	standard 12:15	struck 5:5 70:7	42:8,16,32	Síochána 21:5 82:22
53:27,28,30 56:22	83:13,14 84:13	standards 39:22 51:23	structure 76:5	44:9,28,29 48:11	83:2
67:4,8	sometimes 31:19	55:13,14	structures 74:22	49:2 51:11 54:16	Snell 3:24,25 7:8,9,24
sites 23:11 27:23	37:20 54:5 79:7	stands 73:8 77:26	struggling 52:16	58:5,7 71:11,16	48:32,33 51:13
50:29 56:24	somewhere 50:34	80:21	stuck 85:21	86:32	55:25
sitting 17:32 52:6	son 4:10,26	start 2:3,10 8:17,27	students 84:9,12	supposed 36:3	Soap 59:31
60:17 62:18	sons 4:33	21:20 23:12 28:3	85:20	suppressed 66:33	Sorcha 38:32 51:28
86:14,30 87:34	soon 23:12 57:10,14	32:17 33:21 40:13	study 75:3,4,13,15,27	sure 5:11 17:27 18:28	Sorry 12:27 22:7 33:7
situ 28:32	58:28	42:26 56:26,30	76:13 77:23 85:19	24:3 31:11	36:8,15 47:20
situation 24:11 51:15	sooner 17:34	58:17 84:22,23	stuff 34:26 50:18	36:5,29 39:19	67:21 70:33 71:1
56:8 65:24 71:23	solely 87:21	started 33:20 62:20	51:19,29 52:18	41:33 44:22	80:24 85:7
situations 43:12	sort 20:10 28:12	starting 16:26 41:18	53:3,12,30 58:27	56:16,26,29 57:5	87:9,15
51:22 87:18	34:28 56:26 59:34	46:16	61:3 64:28 65:3	64:31 88:2	Southern 6:16 76:27
six 15:14 17:25,33	84:22	state 11:32 16:18	73:24 77:34	surplus 9:5	Specialist 69:22
20:5 24:22 40:18	sought 9:27 34:1	50:14,24 54:30,32	subject 11:21 25:18	surprise 34:9	SPC 27:32,33 64:2,16
41:34 86:17	72:31	56:4	32:19	surprised 39:3	72:3,5,8,31 73:9
sixties 5:29	source 11:1 56:6	stated 31:34	submission 31:31	surprising 15:8	74:12,23,27 77:29
skate 56:23	sourcing 32:34	statement 8:22	submissions 26:10	surveys 54:2	82:29
skill 49:15 69:4	south 49:4 50:29	13:21,22 31:9	34:21 41:30	survival 27:14	Stenography 1:47
slap 50:25	54:30	station's 31:17	submit 53:15	survivors 84:10	Stephen 3:26 4:23
slapped 50:28	space 17:12 62:23	station 30:34 31:1	submitted 13:23	suspension 80:13	7:24 18:2 69:7
slight 46:22	spare 34:6	39:10 79:2	25:21 30:11 34:24	sustainable 30:18	78:14 79:17
slow 23:8 35:15 43:17	speak 32:6 35:5	stations 23:33 33:6	75:1	35:12,24 36:33	Steven 5:13
46:29 47:8,9,12	43:6,29 45:23	78:15,19,22,29,31	submitting 32:22	swallow 59:34	Stradbally 50:17
66:24 83:27 84:3	48:4 49:32,33	,33 79:25,33 80:3	subsequently 11:11	swan 30:24	Strok 4:12
small 21:19 40:32	72:10	statistics 83:12,27,32	substantial 12:18	swans 27:14	STENOGRAPHER 1:33
45:19 47:2 50:29	speakers 42:4 73:29	stats 64:26	success 19:3 22:24	swathes 66:34	STOKES 3:26,27
52:13,15,20,24	speaking 4:12 50:20	stayed 67:33	36:29 48:30 63:27	swim 37:15	4:23,24 7:24 18:3
53:24 64:13,15	78:20 87:13,14	steady 39:17	77:12 88:8	swimming 37:18	20:27 21:4 22:21
66:27 81:26,27	special 56:29	steam 87:16	successful 34:4,7	53:18	23:10 69:7,34
smallest 46:34 47:3	species 72:19	steel 22:15	52:23 53:1 54:7	sympathies 5:32	70:1,20 71:17
smart 74:4	specific 10:11 22:3	steer 14:31	68:10 77:13	sympathy 4:1,3,5 5:18	72:3,7,9
smile 5:8	specifically 45:17	steering 35:2,11	such 12:16 13:3 20:28	system 6:14,15	74:2,25,26 78:14
soccer 46:11	speech 43:31,33 66:7	57:34 67:12	24:14 28:4 50:32	39:26,30,31	79:30,31
	speechless 48:26	stems 31:28	61:10 63:16,17		Summer 38:21 69:17

Sunday 18:16	terms 14:29	32:11 34:4 43:29	thereabouts	though 23:3 65:33	tourist 45:31 80:28
Surveillance 69:22	17:5,20,23,26	47:8 48:8,12	7:4,12,19,27 8:9	thought 30:28 45:5	81:7,8,12
Sylvester 2:19 8:17	19:25 27:23 30:2	50:12 51:18 55:11	therefore 26:1 32:27	50:3 56:17 61:28	tourists 37:24 81:1
Systems 68:29	34:25 42:17,24	56:17 57:11,15,32	they're 33:19	66:33 73:31 74:1	towards 32:11 51:22
T	43:2 45:16 46:1	59:33	37:21,24 42:33	86:14	52:8 64:32
table 11:1 49:25	47:33 65:18,27	60:6,26,27,31	50:17,31,34 51:1	thousand 19:31 59:16	town 1:6 12:29
52:15 77:16	71:18 74:15 86:1	61:16 62:4	52:15 66:12,13	82:32	17:8,15,16,17,18
tables 62:18	terrible 79:21	68:6,27 71:13	67:18 68:6 73:23	three 27:12,20 30:19	19:33 20:8 23:17
tactile 78:24	terribly 36:15	73:21 74:4 77:2	74:22 83:18	39:29 42:12,14,18	34:23 37:4 42:25
take 8:5,16,27 10:24	test 26:2,11,22 31:33	81:7,23 83:1 84:2	they've 60:25 87:20	45:28 46:27,28,33	48:29 53:6 55:3,4
14:4 18:19,22	69:24	85:14,32	thing 14:14 17:22	47:3,33 55:4	56:2 59:29 74:33
21:28 26:11 30:16	testify 5:12	86:6,17,18	25:32 28:14,25	59:15 60:8,23	75:19,25,27,29,30
32:32 35:27 37:28	text 16:4	87:21,23,28 88:1	36:27 47:1 48:28	63:2,5 64:11	34 76:14,15
42:17 45:30,32	than 6:11,31 14:27	them 10:24 11:7,8	50:6,20 55:9 63:9	66:11 83:33 85:6	77:33,34 81:9
48:10 51:21	21:23 29:8	16:6 25:16,29	64:18 65:1,25	threshold 12:24	85:18,19,20
55:17,29 57:22	37:17,31 38:15	26:1,14,26 28:32	77:12 78:2 86:33	thriving 51:32	townland
63:3 69:11	39:34 42:18 43:12	30:25 33:19,23,24	87:1	through 16:1,2 17:10	7:5,13,20,28
70:24,25 72:11	46:12 50:9 51:22	34:2,3 35:20	things 5:8 15:1 26:21	22:3 32:20 34:2	towns 20:16 55:5
73:29,34 78:4,9	57:4,26 58:25	37:1,8,21 41:26	35:7 36:31 37:14	41:24 44:21 47:19	townspeople 54:24
84:13 86:31 87:2	64:2,11 74:5	45:3 46:28	47:30 50:5 51:33	50:26 60:9 62:22	track 17:18 56:22
taken 25:32 26:34	76:34 84:17	47:5,6,23 50:24	52:13 53:1,10	68:6 69:25	62:22,25
33:29 67:6,9	thankful 53:4	51:3,4,8,14	54:5 56:27 57:13	72:16,31 76:23,33	traders 53:1
68:25 78:19 86:5	thanks 2:5 4:2,22,29	52:6,7,18,26,29,3	63:3 64:10,23	78:7,8 79:5	tradition 40:26
takes 69:15	5:29 8:20,26	0 53:3 54:25	66:10 73:24	throughout 50:29	traffic 37:3,7 42:31
taking 17:24 26:13	10:29 12:14	55:34 56:17 59:1	think 6:30 11:23	80:11 81:1 82:1,8	74:32,34
27:3 74:34 84:4	13:5,31 14:15	60:32 66:13	12:25 14:17,34	83:13	75:5,10,19,24
talent 5:6	15:33 21:21 23:23	69:16,32 71:21,29	15:23 17:7	throw 65:29	76:1,34 77:7 83:4
talk 21:5 30:33 32:13	24:5,7	72:15,16,19,26	18:21,16 19:2,7	thrown 62:4	tragedies 37:17
33:8 37:22 46:7	27:15,26,30 29:24	75:32 77:17	20:4,15 22:6	tick 69:27 72:19,22	tragic 4:17
55:32 59:20,28,29	30:15 35:28	84:12,17,28 85:2	24:12 25:14,27	74:6	tragically 4:4,12
62:4 63:1 64:21	36:6,9,14 42:4	themselves 15:2	26:28 28:26 29:2	ticket 33:14,15	trail 18:32
71:33	47:29,30 48:33	30:20 44:2 84:14	30:3,17,21 32:31	ticking 28:18	trails 19:17
talked 43:30 64:19	51:9,11 54:5	86:17	35:13 36:21,27,28	ticks 69:14,18 70:9,15	train 62:26
talking 36:4 49:34	58:17 62:10,15	then 5:4 8:27 13:11	37:12,24 38:28	72:14,20,30	training 41:14
52:34 60:16,29	63:34 71:26 72:13	19:14 20:33 22:34	39:16,21,24	tied 76:34	transferred 6:13
61:15 65:1	73:25 77:5,19	26:16 30:1,8 34:3	40:17,22 41:16,33	timeline 11:24 30:6	transfers 8:24,28
talks 23:33	78:4 79:4	35:27 36:5,17	42:19,29 43:3	timely 56:21	9:4,10,28
target 28:17 33:19	80:19,34 81:12	38:11 46:7,8,19	45:34 47:15	times 5:7 14:30 41:21	10:6,8,9,12,15,19,
targeting 45:18	83:10 84:32	51:26 52:13,33	48:8,13,24	51:5 54:29 55:12	26 13:11
targets 66:16 82:28	86:15,23 88:1	53:26 57:12 63:15	49:7,11,17	58:23 64:11 65:32	transform 53:5
taste 77:34	that 4:32 5:6,10	64:20 65:4 70:33	50:5,25,30	77:1 78:8 80:21	transformation 52:2
taxis 61:16	6:5,6,18,19,22,23,	71:20 72:2,10	51:12,13,14,	84:3	transformed 51:34
team 5:4,14	28,29,30	73:18 75:21,27	thinking 6:27,28	timing 56:31	transition 84:8
14:6,11,12	7:1,10,17,24	76:33 77:16 86:28	14:34 20:2 64:2	tiny 19:30	transpires 79:32
15:23,24 17:19	8:1,16,17,28	88:11	73:3	today 6:15,18 12:19	transport 26:33
23:19 28:30 32:22	9:1,7,14	there's 10:31 11:7	third 61:21	15:5 16:16 17:20	27:5,11 30:29
40:16 52:5,6	10:13,20,24	13:21 16:21,27	this 5:12	35:2 48:9	36:10 37:5
55:22 56:25 57:33	11:1,3,10,12,15,1	20:10 24:17 29:30	6:4,7,10,16,28 8:5	49:22,25,28,34	39:26,30,31,33
64:10 66:26 87:34	8,28,29	33:11 34:28 38:2	9:11,17,18,19,20	59:4 60:32 62:18	40:29 44:28 61:13
teat 40:7	12:1,2,4,5,6,11,12	40:1	10:32,33 11:29	64:26 72:30 76:7	75:3,4,13,15
technical 82:9	,15,18,20,23,30,3	41:1,5,14,15,24,3	12:4,20 14:7,9,34	told 17:33 26:20	82:25 85:19
technician 68:30	4	1 42:22,24,32	15:13 16:26 17:28	29:19,20 30:34	transportation 9:33
technology 2:7	13:2,10,13,21,22,	43:26 46:3,29,33	19:12,27,28,32,33	37:8 41:11,23	travel 16:15 37:32
tell 58:25 88:13	25,28,31	47:10 49:3,5,13	20:5 21:18	48:21 51:1 60:6	38:5,9,15 84:20
telling 17:29 37:21	14:5,9,11,12,24,5	51:12 53:22 56:28	22:8,19 24:29,30	65:32 68:1	travelled 4:20 65:23
template 78:24	6,27,32	58:8 59:30	25:4,7,16,22,26	76:24,34 86:7	travels 39:29
temporary 18:31	15:8,11,16,17,26,	60:7,11,13,19,31,	26:1,5,11,18,19,2	tolerance 33:12,16	treat 70:10 74:6
ten 29:27 63:2 69:4	34	32	2,29,30 27:10,23	tomorrow 44:18	treatment 52:2 59:26
83:13,20	16:4,6,13,15,16,2	61:3,10,18,27,28	28:34	tongue 4:13	72:27
tenants 57:31 58:2	6,32 17:9,14,1	64:5,20 65:25,32	29:10,19,21,31	tonight 88:3	tremendous 18:4
tend 32:11	the 2:6,7,10	71:32 74:21 76:14	30:10,21,28	too 21:27 22:11,16	tribunal 10:13,20
tender 19:6,27	4:3,5,8,11,17,18,1	77:15 83:13	31:26,33	26:18,20 31:11	tribute 5:9 14:5
22:17,18 28:28	9,20,21,30,31,32,	there 2:7 6:23,25	33:23,24,28	32:18 63:2 79:27	15:22,33 23:24
66:14 67:24	33	11:1,7,22,26	34:15,17	took 5:4 6:10 27:18	24:8 25:16 27:31
68:2,7	5:2,3,4,6,7,8,10,1	12:2,3,6,27 13:24	thorough 29:4	60:29	87:15
tendering 21:32	4,19,20,27,28,32	16:21 17:17,30	those 2:7 8:17 11:34	top 11:1 22:8 40:29	tributes 24:12
tenders 33:2 66:9	6:6,10,11,12,13,1	18:14,15,30,34	15:4 22:30 23:11	45:15 49:25	tricky 87:18
tennis 56:22	4,15,16,17,18,19,	19:7,9,18	25:23 27:20 32:27	57:11,15 87:29	tried 15:9
tension 87:18	20,21,22,23,24,25	21:16,25,26,27,34	33:3 34:9 37:4,10	topics 86:11	trips 28:26
tensions 43:23	,28,29,31,33,34	22:2,5,11 23:1,5	40:12 42:2 43:2	torn 51:19	truck 84:18
tented 50:5,6	7:4,6,12,14,15,19,	25:30 27:11	44:5,29 45:31	touch 22:29	trucks 60:19 84:16,17
term 18:6 19:12	20,23,27,29,31,32	28:1,3,9,25,27	46:20,27 54:16	touched 52:12,18	true 15:2 49:14 66:8
22:8,9,11 48:12	8:4,6,9,15,16,17,2	29:6,16,18,20,29	55:6,17 56:6 60:2	touching 73:5	64:27 66:27 78:25
51:27 53:24 74:34	2,24,25,26,27,30,	30:1,2,3,5,6,11,12	63:20 64:11 66:1	tough 5:6 14:23 72:25	truth 65:31
76:8,9	31,32,33	,22,23,27,33	68:3 69:20 70:7	77:15	truthfully 49:3
80:11,14,28 86:1	9:1,2,4,10,12,14,1	31:2,34 32:26,34	76:5,26 77:16	tourism 16:28 18:9	35:15 47:4 53:7
87:20	5,16	33:1,2,16,17,29	81:30 82:31	22:29 80:9,12,31	64:27 66:27 78:25
termining 81:23	their 21:7 25:29,34	34:9,22,23,33	86:5,21,28,30	81:27	80:29 84:20
	26:4,24 27:18	36:7,16 3	87:22		

trying 19:17 22:23 30:24 56:6,12 57:13 66:27 76:15 81:27 84:22	0,21 28:17,29 31:34 32:10,11,20,25 33:2,11,13,14,32 34:3,16 37:2 38:30 39:23 40:33 44:32,34 45:9,10 46:14 47:8,11 48:7,20 49:5,24 50:4,6,23,24 52:5,16,25,26 53:3,27 54:	understood 23:28,29 undertake 75:14 78:15 undertaking 86:26 undertook 32:32 underway 46:28 undone 46:19 unexpected 36:28 unfortunate 37:17 60:26 unfortunately 17:25 20:6 22:15 26:3 37:16 41:4,12 43:16 45:12 49:34 50:6,14 51:7 58:5,8 87:31 unions 68:33 unique 23:29 40:14,15 unit 9:18,20 25:19,23 united 40:17 units 17:24 85:2 unless 45:11 unnoticed 40:20 unreal 61:3 until 6:6 12:16 20:5,7 25:20 32:9 34:21 39:25,29 46:16 54:2,9 57:14 80:14 untimely 5:3 upcoming 15:4 78:20 update 11:3 14:3 18:29 20:23 29:3 30:5,13 31:17 35:17 40:5 41:34 42:2 67:17 83:7 updated 34:19 47:11 69:25 updates 18:25 22:21 44:33 upon 38:10 upsetting 51:16 uptake 45:1,14,16 urban 86:7 urged 19:28 30:32 urgency 17:31 77:9 urgently 80:10 use 33:33,34 46:26 51:28 64:29 73:21 81:3,7 82:20 83:1 used 26:22 39:32 81:2,9 useful 37:24 73:2 users 20:33 69:30 78:22 82:20 61:13 74:4 using 31:2 35:26 42:26 46:30 56:31 61:13 74:4 usual 60:5 88:13 usually 70:9 Ukraine 50:9 University 6:20 85:19 Upstairs 53:22	vermin 43:33 65:19 very 3:34 4:9,17,26,28,32 5:21,25,31 6:1,26,27 9:8 11:17 12:3 13:31 14:12,13,17,18,21 15:3,28 18:2 19:3,19 20:1,17 21:15,16 22:33 23:6,8,27 24:6,34 25:4,8,30 26:19,26,29,32 27:20 28:9,32 29:4,11,16,21,23 30:14,15 34:5,7,22 36:23 37:24,33 38:22,23,27,31 39	29:26 30:16 31:12 35:15 36:7 37:33 42:6,8,11 43:6,9,31 44:10,12,17 46:7 47:1 49:7 51:30 52:5 55:6,15 59:1 62:10,17,18 63:24,34 71:29 77:2 79:3 83:8,18 84:31 85:33 wanted 27:17 52:12,21 64:18 85:11 87:2 wanting 46:26 48:7 50:11 81:15 wants 6:30 25:32 51:13 war 50:9 warden 33:14 83:2,3 wardens 83:4 warmly 18:8 75:32 warning 47:14 60:10 69:9 73:5 74:16 warrant 68:12 was 4:18,31,32 5:5,6,9,10,18,19,2 4,25,28,29 6:13,15,27,28 8:25 9:4,5,10,11,22 10:13,20 11:10,22 13:18,19,20 14:34 15:34 16:3,4,5 17:25,28 18:15,16 19:4,6,30 20:6,9 21:22 22:10,12,16,33 23:25,30 24:2,34 25:14,18,19,25,30 26:20 27:11,33 28:1,2,3,4,14,20,2 5, wasn't 22:2 30:29 49:28 53:4 58:21 61:28 62:32 68:11 79:27 waste 59:25 wasted 24:22 32:25 wasting 31:13 watchful 39:6 watching 33:2 53:10 watershed 6:12 way 7:6,14,22 13:2 20:10 21:16,17 22:16 28:3 35:1,9,21 40:1 41:3 47:8 48:20 52:31 54:5 60:26 66:27 74:28 76:31,33 77:3,28 80:32 we'd 25:10 we'll 6:1 21:28 32:17 55:16 58:24 we're 11:7,22 12:11 17:6 19:8 24:34 26:21 27:25 40:15 42:18 50:32 60:16,29 62:34 63:2,14 64:32 66:25 77:3 78:2 81:14 88:5 wealth 38:33 weather 20:23 53:34 84:19 weaving 64:12,14	website 11:12 69:25,26,33 70:12 83:7,18 week 4:4 28:26 35:20 39:9 47:21,22 48:5 55:4 58:11,15 59:26 66:12 85:16 weekend 14:34 22:31 53:11 weeks 11:4 17:14,33 21:33 22:5,17 24:32 43:8 45:18 49:29 59:15 60:23 87:5 weighbridge 83:1 weighbridges 82:34 welcome 2:5 6:31 17:18 18:9 38:31 39:4 44:33 56:2 75:32 welcoming 43:15 welfare 10:1 27:13 79:13 well 4:5,16,20 9:32 10:10 14:21 15:5,24,30 17:1,3 18:27 19:22,23 20:3,27 21:2,6,20 24:12,14 26:8 27:34 28:1 30:10 31:11,18 32:17 36:20,24 37:17 38:2,6,15 39:16,18 40:13,20,23,29 42:9 44:21,22 45:9,18 46:8 48:3,13 49:13,19 51:17 52:34 53:26 54:17 55:33 56: went 5:24 11:11 17:28 32:20 72:16 were 6:19 10:4 11:9,26 16:6,23 23:30 24:19 25:1,26,33 26:4 27:13 28:22 30:19,34 34:15,22 35:7,9,25 37:1,6,9 38:32,33 40:5 42:15,18 47:32 48:4 50:4 52:22,23 53:4,5 54:14 56:16 59:18 62:30 64:11 67:16,17 68:28,30 75:10 78:22 81:21,23 85:6 87:19 weren't 8:17 52:28 61:26 what's 18:27,28 20:31 25:27 42:1 51:2 59:27 60:17 61:33 65:14 what 10:32 11:3,14 12:34 15:2,14,15 17:8,20,22 19:1 20:32 21:25 22:16 23:30 24:31 25:19,31 26:4,27 29:3,21 30:16 32:29,34 33:4 34:3,5,8,9,28,30 35:11,21,27 36:23,34 37:7,34 42:24,34 43:33 44:4,6,10,33
--	---	--	--	---	--

45:27,30,33,34	15:3,4 18:5 26:34	19:3,8,17,32,33	worthy 49:10	30:32 31:10 34:23	6:1,4,8,9,18,21,23
46:5 47:28 48:26	27:4,5,13 33:29	20:1,10,33	would 2:5	36:9 37:12,29	,26,27 7:2,10,17
49:3,34 51:19	37:33 38:26,32	21:14,16,25,33	4:2,4,8,11,24,30,3	38:8,13,34	8:19,21 10:26,27
56:12 60	48:17,18,19	22:4,14,28,29	3 5:22 6:25	39:4,13,25,30,31	11:16,17,18,19,20
whatever 31:3 39:20	49:4,6,15	23:4,17,19,30	11:2,15	40:6,	12:13,33
53:7 55:20,28	50:11,14,15,16	24:7,9,22,24,28	12:15,18,24,29,30	WINTERS 3:32,33	13:2,11,13,20
58:24 59:5,29	52:5 57:12,23,31	25:5,9,20,22	14:5,13,27	63:23,24	14:2,6,9,17,18,19,
62:3 74:16	58:2 59:19,33	26:27,33 27:2,8,2	15:22,26 17:30	80:24,33,34 81:14	20:21,22,23,26,29
wheelchair 78:18,22	60:24 64:4 67:5	withdrawal 26:33	18:8,32	86:19 88:4,5	,30,31,32,34
wheelchairs 80:1	68:15 70:7,13,14	31:19 36:10	19:11,21,25	Wooded 69:20	15:1,3,4,5,8,12,23
when 5:4 11:11 13:25	72:10,22 76:8,24	withdrawing 67:23	20:5,27 21:30	Works 10:15,16 22:14	,26,28
14:31 17:12 21:25	79:16 83:16 84:10	within 11:24	22:33 23:6,26	33:25 59:28,30	16:6,7,29,30,31,3
23:19,25	85:32	34:30,33,34 44:29	24:28 25:7,29	60:19 75:18 78:34	2 17:1,2,3,7,33 18
26:4,10,34	86:5,6,17,22,28,	60:11,23 64:27	26:27,28 28:21,32	WW10471F 8:9	young 60:7,8 83:32
28:21,30	whoever 17:14 24:29	83:17	29:6,7,25	WW2384L 7:29	85:13
30:6,23,33 32:11	39:21 40:7,8	without 14:10 15:13	30:17,25,34	X	your
33:8,10,33 34:1	64:30 88:11	19:11 22:23 33:13	31:2,11 34:30,34	XE12 7:6	14:10,15,17,24,25
37:20 39:32	whole 18:26 20:23	43:7 50:22,23	35:1,7 36:19	Y	,26 15:5,12,15
40:17,18 41:15	25:5 30:18	53:16 56:24 59:25	37:8,9,13,14,18,3	yard 10:15	17:1 18:1,4,6
42:17,33 43:31	31:10,13 38:29	63:12 72:25	1 38:18,22 39:	yards 60:7	24:14 27:33
46:2,20 47:27,33	43:10 51:14 52:3	woman 58:25,26,28	wouldn't 33:34 46:18	year's 16:8	28:7,10 29:26
49:14 50:4,21,23	53:19,28 56:25	women 6:16,30	47:1 51:34 55:27	year 4:3 6:10,28	31:31,32 36:7
51:16,19 52:14	59:30 64:11 65:19	won't 17:2 55:20	57:24 66:6 71:4	7:6,14,22	38:19 39:34 41:7
54:14,21 56:5	71:23 77:33	won 5:20 27:21	73:14 85:17	9:6,7,10,15,18	42:6,9 44:13
63:4 64:21,31	whom 27:32	wonder 18:18 19:32	wrist 50:28	16:25 19:27 21:12	45:25,30 47:34
65:4 66:12,27,28	whose 69:15	wonderful 5:5 62:21	write 27:6 31:18	22:13,19 25:4	49:10,18,19,26,28
68:9 69:17 71:34	wicklowcoco 44:20	63:15,26 88:12	37:27 38:3 40:30	33:22,23,24,28	52:5,6 55:28
7	wider 4:34 5:14 30:33	wondering 19:8,16	44:30 50:24 54:20	34:13,14,15,17,18	60:11 62:11 63:30
where 5:24 6:13	73:25	24:2 28:17,21	55:34 80:22	40:25 57:5 60:27	66:21,24 67:34
11:29 15:11,12	widespread 47:9	29:21 37:22 40:33	84:25,28	63:2,5 69:24	72:8 79:12,13
18:32 19:8	wife 4:10,33 5:12	54:25 68:2	writes 26:32 36:9	83:13,19,20,21,22	83:9
20:14,32 21:7	49:17	woodland 69:16,19	writing 25:21 38:4	,23 84:8 85:1,14	86:2,10,25,32,34
24:19 25:8	will 2:10 4:26 5:12,15	word 54:25 58:11	73:28	86:10 87:16	87
26:15,29 27:2	6:24,25 8:5,16	59:5 66:3 76:13	written 41:11 61:2	88:6,12	years 36:16
30:34 31:24 33:13	9:19 10:25,27	wording 25:18,19	85:24	years 4:10,18,20,22	yourself 2:4 14:1
35:3,13,17	11:32 12:20	33:7 36:3,5 80:22	wrong 20:4 50:26	6:7,9,18,29 9:8	20:18 31:15 58:18
37:4,15,16 38:33	13:24,25,27 14:17	words 6:8 24:18,21	60:34 68:8 83:14	14:16,23,32 15:5	69:27 86:33
40:4 41:33 43:1	15:8,12,19	40:12	www 1:50	17:2,9,13 18:34	yourselves 43:34
44:12 45:10 46:25	18:22,26,28 19:34	work 11:10 14:26	Wall 50:18	19:9,28,29,34	Z
48:8 50:28 53:3	20:17,19,21,23	15:1,8,24 19:22	Walsh 3:30,31 13:10	20:4 22:23 23:25	zoned 19:16
55:28 56:11	21:5,14,15,16,20,	22:2 23:12,16	29:23,24 32:9	24:10 27:25	zoom 64:31
59:16,27,32	24,25,32	25:25	34:32 35:18 51:28	29:3,27 30:18	Zero 33:12,16
60:6,13,19,28	22:5,7,8,9,14,30	28:1,3,4,8,9,10	84:31,32 86:20	40:22	82:18,27
61:2 64:12 65:32	23:1,20 24:31	32:24,33 33:21	Washington 53:21	42:12,14,16,18,19	... 13:7 20:11 32:26
71:19,21,29,33	25:18 26:22	34:17 35:25 36:23	Water 34:26 37:12,23	45:28 47:34 48:34	000 9:5,6
72:28,29	28:8,9,17,30	38:15 40:13,24	59:25 61:28,30	49:2,11 50:26	10:13,14,15,16,17
wherever 20:21	31:6,15,34	44:12 47:32	62:3	51:18,27 52:10	,22 42:25
whether 28:31	32:13,23,25,26,27	49:1,4,11 51:22	We've 26:14 58:26	53:2 54:6 58:27	00PM 2:1
49:5,12 50:8,34	33:2,7,8,	52:8 54:5	West 15:13 17:2	60:24,28,30 61:1	010 57:21
52:30 60:25 77:17	willing 19:17	55:19,21 56:7	24:13 27:34 38:34	62:15,25,31	024 9:34
79:14	win 53:25	59:13 60:4 61:15	39:4,13,21,25,30,	63:5,6,14,21	0254 7:27
which 8:25	wine 88:3	62:19,28 63:27	31	65:9,11 19:14:20	0287 1:50
9:6,8,15,20 10:10	winged 59:18	64:12,13 65:4,6	40:5,7,14,16,17,1	20:27 21:11 22:6	071 57:22
13:6,17 14:12	wish 6:26 14:17,21	69:15 70:14 75:16	9,31 41:3,22	23:10,13 29:22	086 1:50
16:24 19:33	15:3 16:5 17:3	80:29 83:2	43:24,26 49:2,3,4	33:9,19 34:20,32	100 60:7
20:1,4,13,16	19:3,22 36:24	worked 4:21 5:23	50:18,22,30 58:25	35:18 45:30 47:13	104 8:23 9:26
21:16 23:31 24:20	39:18 42:6 47:31	14:12,22 28:13	59:8	55:18 61:6 66:24	10th 11:22
25:14 28:13,26	48:30 49:18 51:31	39:16 45:9 49:6	Wexford 16:12	67:21,30,32	114 64:22
30:20 31:27 33:29	54:17 59:3	54:16 58:20 65:33	Whitestown 10:31,32	70:26,32 71:1	115 7:12
34:13 39:32 44:5	62:11,13 63:27	worker 5:18	11:2,20	72:5 73:11,30	118 17:24
45:2,16	66:5 86:28	workforce 68:32	Why 26:1 38:13,18	76:20 78:12	120 10:2
46:1,14,25	87:2,3,19,23,29,3	working 15:23 17:19	42:16 46:21,22	79:4,20 80:5,19	125 6:7,9,18,29 27:25
47:9,22 48:5	2 88:8,10	22:22 27:4,32,34	47:4 63:3 77:32	81:12 83:10 84:29	85:9,11,26
50:17 52:14,26	wished 63:24	57:13 62:14 64:26	83:25 84:27 87:62	86:11,26	yesterday 18:16
57:24,26	wishes 29:25	67:12,18 73:23	WHITEGATES 1:6	yet 10:31 11:34 29:32	yet 10:31 11:34 29:32
62:25,29,33	wishing 24:8 28:7	75:28	Wicklow's 57:19	33:20 50:30	you'd 25:27
63:7,18 68:2,19	36:20 58:17	82:21,22,26,31	Wicklow 1:3,6 4:19	33:20 50:30	you'll 17:2
69:25 70:4,12	with 2:7,10 4:21	workings 14:29	6:10,11,21,22,23,	70:26,32 71:1	you're 22:18 26:20
72:20,24 75:1,26	5:3,8,17,28 6:17	world 4:20 53:21	34	72:5 73:11,30	30:23 37:3
76:2	8:4,23,27,31	65:25,27	7:5,13,20,21,22,2	76:20 78:12	49:13,17 50:24
while 9:26 27:25	11:8,30	worn 38:6	8,29,30,31	79:4,20 80:5,19	57:2 72:29 80:5
41:14 62:19 63:4	12:2,4,6,16	worried 27:13 84:2	8:10,11,30 9:15	81:12 83:10 84:29	85:9,11,26
64:26 70:6 71:26	13:1,17,20,22,24	worrying 27:20 81:34	11:33 12:28,30,31	86:11,26	yesterday 18:16
75:18,26 78:23	14:12,22	worse 50:5 84:23	13:16 14:7,8,15	87:2	yet 10:31 11:34 29:32
81:23	15:1,18,23	worst 74:20	15:13 17:8,15	88:6,12	33:20 50:30
whilst 67:26 84:2	16:5,14	worth 12:34 71:9	18:4,11,12,19,21	89:11,27,30	you'd 25:27
who 2:5 4:3,18,25,30	17:12,13,29	worthwhile 24:24	19:2,16 20:28	89:11,27,30	you'll 17:2
5:18,23 6:19	18:13,21,29,32	68:14	22:29 23:17	89:11,27,30	you're 22:18 26:20
13:24 14:6,20			26:1,6,26 27:34	89:11,27,30	30:23 37:3

Council Meeting – 13 May 2025

106

190 9:33	2020 68:26,30	64:22 69:8,26	26th 7:6 28:21 34:21	403 10:9	616 10:13
1989 19:31,33	2021 20:9 29:2 62:22	75:15 80:9	278 10:22	41st 53:20	649 10:8
1st 69:8	68:26,31	83:19,22	27th 47:20	447 10:16	782 9:33
200 10:16 17:26 59:15	2022 9:5 68:26,31	204 9:34	280 10:15	450 10:15	7th 24:30
69:23	2023 8:22,30,34	20th 5:3	28th 80:9	478 9:34	800 10:14 42:24
2001 8:24 13:17	9:2,22 10:12	221 13:17	300 62:33 64:21	500 57:25	84X 76:26
2010 5:4	13:16,22,24 28:15	222 9:34	341 9:5	534 10:8	871 9:33
2016 62:32	29:31 33:19	22nd 6:11	375 10:17	559 10:1	8th 6:34
2019 58:5	68:26,31	23rd 68:23	38km 16:27	591 10:9	950 50:4,16
64:8,9,19,21	2024 1:16 2:1 6:34	23th 7:14	38th 53:20	598 9:6 10:1	997 10:2
68:26,29 75:3,27	7:6,15,23 28:17	24th 67:24	398 1:50	600 84:8	9th 7:23
76:13	29:30,31,33 33:27	257 52:19	400 17:13 61:11	602 9:33	