

**ORDINARY MEETING OF**  
**WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL**

**ON**

**MONDAY, 9<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2023 AT 2:00 P.M.**

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**TRANSCRIPT OF ORDINARY MEETING HELD ON MONDAY,  
FEBRUARY 13TH 2023:**

[ MEETING MUTED ]

HELEN: Cllr Erika Doyle, can you hear me now?

CLLR DOYLE: I can hear you now.

ADMINISTRATOR: Apologies. Cllr Miriam Murphy, can you also hear?  
And Cllr Ferris?

CLLR FERRIS: I can hear you now.

[Roll call taken]

HELEN: Thank you, sorry, Jen, can you hear us now.  
Perfect, thank you very much.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much for that Helen. Okay, did Cllr Miriam Murphy come in that time? Is she there or not there? Okay, that is fair enough. Okay, Helen, first item on the agenda. Condolences. We pray for Ann Fortune, wife of our colleague, Cllr Tom Fortune. Pauline Doyle, William Redmond, father of our colleague, Billy Redmond. Gabriel Gay Robinson, wife of our former colleague, Tony Robinson. Margaret Timmins mother of our colleague, Seamus Timmins.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy.

CLLR FLYNN KENNEDY: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I just want to remember the late Teresa White, wife of George White, George would have been involved with Bray Municipal District and Wicklow County Council with the cemetery up in spring field. Teresa passed way after an illness with leukaemia. Just to remember George's family and also to be associated with the condolences for Ann Fortune.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Erika Doyle.

CLLR DOYLE: Just to be associated with the sympathies for Ann Fortune. Anyone who was at the service for Ann would have left, I think with a real sense of just how much she achieved against all the odds. It was actually, it was a very uplifting ceremony. It was actually a wonderful testament to her and to her family. Thank you, Chair.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Stokes.

CLLR STOKES: Go raibh maith agat. I just want to be associated with the sympathy for Ann Fortune and all of The Fortune family. Such a lovely lady. I knew her since 2009. Just someone who gave so much to the community in Kilcoole and other family members in Bray as well. Very sad time and we are all thinking of Cllr Fortune and The Fortune family.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Sylvester Bourke.

CLLR BOURKE: I would like to add my condolences to the Fortune family to Tom Fortune on his loss. Also the McHugh family in Bray on the passing of Pat McHugh. She was a former town councillor, a Fine Gael member. She passed away last month and I would like to extend condolences to her family.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Gerry Walsh.

CLLR WALSH: Just, as Cathaoirleach of the Municipal District, Greystones Municipal District, I just want to be associated with the sentiments there expressed by the members to Tom Fortune and his family and also to the wider Minogue family in Bray on the sad loss of Ann.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Can we stand for a minute's silence, please.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: May the souls and the souls of the faithfully departed rest in peace. Amen.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Now, number two on the agenda.

HELEN PURCELL: We have received a request for a suspension of standing orders. That the members of Wicklow County Council object strenuously to the Coillte decision to partner with a UK fund, depriving the Irish people and profits accruing at the same time and at the same time driving up the price of agricultural land which could be bought by Irish farmers. We want to halt this and ensure the future ownership of forestry assets remain in the hands of the Irish people. That was submitted by Cllr Peir Leonard, Cllr Tom Fortune and Cllr Joe Behan. It was proposed... and seconded by Cllr Leonard. Yeah.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, thank you. Are we in agreement to take that at 4:30. Okay. All agreed. Motion at 4:30pm.

HELEN PURCELL: Item number one to consider the minutes of ordinary meeting of Wicklow County Council held on Monday 9th of January.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Proposer for that? Cllr Gail Dunne and seconder? Pat Fitzgerald. Thank you. Any matters arising?  
No matters arising. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, Cllr Walsh.

CLLR WALSH: On the next item I would like to declare an interest as a member of the club. I will excuse myself from this part of the meeting.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Anyone else? Cllr Matt Barry.

>>: Having an interest in it as well I would like to remove myself as well.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, thank you. Once it's finished, we will go out and get you, lads, okay. I hope someone will. Thank you, Caroline for that. I am great at volunteering other people's services.

HELEN PURCELL: Item 2, To consider the disposal of 2 acres or thereabouts in the townland of Killincarrig, Greystones, Co Wicklow to Eire Og Greystones CLG, acting by its trustee Iontaobhas Corparaideach Chumann Luthchleas Gael Chideachta Faoi Theorainn Rathaiochta. I'm not as good as the Irish as the Cathaoirleach.  
(As per notice previously circulated).

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Thank you, proposed by Cllr Stokes and seconded by Cllr Derek Mitchell. All agreed? Agreed, thank you.

HELEN PURCELL: We will wait a minute while we bring the councillors back in.

Item number 3, To consider the disposal of 0.20 hectares or thereabouts in the townland of Rathgorragh Lower, Co Wicklow comprised in Folio WW4484 Co Wicklow by Transfer Order to Martin & Helen Blake of Rathgorragh Rathdangan, Co Wicklow, the persons entitled to the freehold interest in the property. (As per notice previously circulated)

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr John Mullen, proposed. Cllr Edward Timmins. Okay, thank you. All agreed? Okay, thank you.

HELEN PURCELL: Item number four. To consider the disposal of 0.223 hectares or thereabouts in the townland of Bray, Co Wicklow, being the property known as 23 Cillmanntain Park, Bray, by Transfer Order to MR Alan Connolly (of 53 Fairyhill, Killarney Road, Bray, Co Wicklow) as Legal Personal Representative of Michael Connolly deceased, the person entitled

to the freehold interest in the property. (As per notice previously circulated)

CATHAOIRLEACH: All agreed? Thank you.

HELEN PURCELL: Item number five is to receive a presentation from Wicklow County Council Audit Committee end of year report 2022.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, Helen, before I bring this in. Can I jump to 9 and 10 on the agenda because it's a fairly full meeting, I don't want to leave those out.

HELEN PURCELL: To consider receiving a deputation from the Wicklow Cheviot Sheep Owners Association.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Pat Kennedy. Thank you, Cathaoirleach thank you to yourself for allowing this item on the agenda today. It's something I feel strongly about and I have been approached by the association to see if they could come in and make a presentation to Ireland. Not every county in Ireland is a county that car quips out sheep farming. It's a way of life in rural Ireland in some counties but it's a way of life in Wicklow. The lambing has already started. While we know how many sheep there are in Wicklow we certainly don't know how many dogs there are in Wicklow. Farmers are under enough strain and pressure without having dogs with no dog control in the county. They would like to make a presentation and I would like the members to support that they come in next month to make a presentation to this chamber. If they go beyond that it's too late.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Shay Cullen.

CLLR S CULLEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I just want to second Cllr Kennedy's proposal. A very good proposal. Look it's no secret that we have a concern in terms of dog control in this county. And, not to go on, chairman, but I certainly would be supporting that we would have a presentation in the March meeting. I think time is of the essence. I suppose the lambing season is effectively the month of March and we need to give the opportunity to the Cheviot Sheep Owners Association to come in to the March meeting and give a presentation.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Is that all agreed with everyone? Cllr Joe Behan.

CLLR BEHAN: I just want to compliment Cllr Kennedy for taking the initiative. This is a great idea. It's quite obvious that sheep farmers are taking a hit in their incomes and it's important for us as a sheep-rearing county that we listen to the people providing that particular industry and work in that industry at the moment. So I would be delighted to hear what they have to say to us.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, thank you. Cllr M Kavanagh.

CLLR M KAVANAGH: Just a very quick. Is there anything that can be done in the meantime given it's going to be another month until the next meeting, that the County Council could do with regards to getting the message out there. Even if it's radio, on the radio in the Wicklow People and the Wicklow Times social media, whatever. Because it really is very important that this gets out ASAP.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Do you want to come in there?

>>: I think we have already put out information on social media. This issue was brought up by Cllr Gerry Walsh at the last meeting. So we are trying to bring awareness to it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, thank you. So we are all agreed with that, so that is great. I am just going to jump to number 10, because it's only, Helen, would you like to read that out.

HELEN PURCELL: Item number 10 is to nominate two members to the German Irish Society. George Jones has requested two representatives to initially join the committee. If possible one from the wider Wicklow County Council area and one from Bray Municipal District. In view of the partnership Ray has with Wurzburg. Do we have any nominations?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Melanie Corrigan.

CLLR CORRIGAN: I propose Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, she has been very active for many years and she would be a great asset to the Society.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Ferris.

CLLR FERRIS: I like to propose Cllr Paul O'Brien for the second place on the German Irish Society. I know he has a great interest as well. He was in Wurzburg last year and I know he would be delighted to work on the committee of the German Irish Society.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Do we have a seconder for... Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy. Thank you, Derek Mitchell. Seconder for Cllr Paul O'Brien? Thank you, Cllr Gail Dunne. Well done on that.

HELEN PURCELL: Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, are you happy to accept the nomination? I know Cllr Paul O'Brien isn't present, but he said he would be happy if nominated. So back to item number five to receive a presentation Wicklow County Council Audit Committee end of year report 2022.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Tom.

TOM: Go raibh maith agat, Cathaoirleach. Wicklow County Council Audit Committee Annual Progress Report for the year ended the 31st of December 2022. Dear councillors, thank you for the opportunity to address the Council here today on the work of the Wicklow County Council Audit Committee for the 12-month period up to the 31st of December 2022. The Audit Committee is a statutory committee established in accordance with Section 59 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014. The Audit Committee has five members who are as follows:

Mr Noel Geraghty, vice chairman, Mrs Mary Savage, Cllr Mary Kavanagh, who we had great support up to October 2022. They were replaced by Cllr Gerry Walsh, another excellent councillor from October until the present. Cllr Edward Timmins and myself, Thomas the chairman.

The role is to support the elected members by providing an independent assessment of the corporate governance environment, the quality of the risk management, financial reporting, financial management and internal audit. The function of the Audit Committee are set out in the local Government Audit Committee regulations, 2014 and include the following. To review financial and budgetary report practices and procedures within the local authority. To foster the development of best practices in the internal audit function, review auditor's report and special reports and assess follow-up actions by management. Assist and promote the efficiency and value for money. Review risk management systems. Make such recommendation to the authority as that can be considered appropriate in relation to the foregoing.

Then we have the internal audit assignment for 2022. The audit and accounting firm Crowleys DFK assist Wicklow County Council in the provision of internal audit services during 2022. The following internal audit reports were finalised during 2022 and reported on to the Audit Committee during the year. Audit, public spending code quality assurance report and see appendix to this report, for further details. That is appendix 1. Following audits are commenced and are due to be reported on in the early 2023. The accounts payable administration of burial grounds, site cap area partnership 2022. Site cap Wicklow partnership 2021. Complete audits are assigned on an assurance rating which represents an objective assessment of the control environment operating in the area under the review. Internal audit recommendation tracker. Then introduction of the audit recommendation tracker during 2022, provides evidence of compliance and further strengthens the control environment within the organisation. The committee will continue to monitor it and discuss the audit, recommendations tracker and its ongoing revisions updating. National Oversight and Audit Commission is

next. One of the functions of the Audit Committee is to review the findings and recommendations of the NOAC report. During 2022, NOAC produced the following reports which were reviewed by the Audit Committee. NOAC public spending code report 2021, NOAC local authority performance indicator report 2021.

Then we have Annual Audit Plan. The Annual Audit Plan sets out the proposed assignment for the coming year. The plan is that following consultation with the Chief Executive the directors of services, heads of function, the list of assignments reflects the ongoing objectives of achieving efficiencies in our process. Adding value, assessing the control environment and contributing towards the organisation strategy objection. Risk register, the review, the corporate risk register at two meetings in 2022. The council has committed to having the risk register in place by the end of Q12022. The committee will continue to monitor and review the risk register as they are updated following quarterly review by Directives and Senior Management Team. It was noted that the Audit Committee of the responsibility to ensure that the council has a robust process in place for maintaining updating the risk register. Local Government Audit Report, in accordance with statutory instruments, appointing Audit Committee, the committee discussed the report from the local government auditor and services and also met with the Local Government Auditor on the 15th of December 2022, to review the 21 local Government Service Statutory Report. As required by Section 121 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended by Section 60 of the Local Government Act 2014, I have attached a report to the council on the committee's consideration of local Government auditor's report. Again I have referred back to Appendix 2. Please read that in your good time, Ladies and Gentlemen. Meetings through the year, the committee met a total of five times during 2022. Meetings with the Chief Executive, director of services and support services, took place on the 17th and the 21st of November 2022.

The Procurement Officer presented to the Audit Committee on the 21st of November. They be acknowledged the process and the professionalism approach being taken in this complex area.

And then training day, regulation 5 of the Local Government Audit Committee. Regulation 2014 requires that the training needs of the Audit Committee are reviewed on an annual basis and reported to the local authority. I can advise the members that our training took place on the 14th of October in collaboration with Mr Philip Burn from the Institute of Public Administration. Audit Committee effectiveness, Regulation 13 of the Local Government Audit Committee regulations 2014, states that the Audit Committee shall undertake annually, a review of its own and shall report to the local authority on its findings. The Audit Committee has completed with this requirement through the use of an extensive evaluation questionnaire.



The Audit Committee has reviewed its own performance and this review follows the guidance outlined in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

Following this review I can confirm that the Audit Committee conducts its business in accordance with the Local Government Audit Committee regulations 2014. And then, Ladies and Gentlemen, the annual work programme consists of the following. The committee annual work programme involves regular meetings throughout the year. The annual work programme may be summarised as follows:

Periodically meetings as required by statutory regulations, considerations and approval of the annual internal audit plan. Dedicated meetings with senior management team. Chairman's meeting with the Chief Executive. Annual training day. Review of risk management system, consideration of internal audit reports, including those heard in connection with the public spending code. Consideration of reports issued by the National Oversight and the Audit Commission. Consideration of any relevant value for money report, review of the annual finance statements. Meeting with the local Government auditor and the consideration of the annual statutory audit report. The annual work programme as outlined above is submitted for adoption by the local authority in accordance with Section 9 of the local Government audit regulation 2014.

On behalf of the Audit Committee I would like to thank you, the members of Wicklow County Council, for your enduring support and assistance as we assure you of our ongoing commitment to the work of the committee. Based on the work undertaken by the Audit Committee and assurance provided by senior management, the committee is satisfied that any issues identified are being addressed by the relevant sections and department as a matter of urgency.

The Audit Committee is satisfied that the statutory obligations under the local Government regulations were carried out and that the objections of its work for 2022 were met. Just before I finish, I would like to acknowledge the presence of our internal auditor, Sandra Nugent who replaced a fine gentleman, Derek Keyes. You are very welcome, Sandra. The committee reaffirms its commitment to carry out its regulatory and statutory duty and fulfilling its oversight role on behalf of the council throughout 2023. Go raibh maith agat, Cathaoirleach. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I will open it up to the floor if anyone has any questions. Oh, that's great. No questions! Okay. Cllr Edward Timmins never lets me down with a question.

CLLR TIMMINS: It is just a comment. I'm on the Audit Committee, so I probably shouldn't be asking questions. Just to acknowledge the work of

the finance section of Wicklow County Council in helping with the Audit Committee and to acknowledge the great work that Sandra has done since she came on board over a year ago or less. I would like to say that it is very important that this committee -- that Sandra and her group get resources from the Council, probably more resources than they have, because the amount of work they have to get through is extraordinary. You could put ten staff in there and they wouldn't have everything fully covered. I would urge the top management to give as much resource as possible to the internal audit. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Edward. That's all. That's everything then from everybody.

Tom, can I thank you and your team, and Sandra and Tom. Can I also thank the councillors on your Audit Committee because it's not the most exciting committee to be on unless you're into figures. Figures are very important. I want to express my gratitude to your Audit Committee for doing the staunch work you're doing at the moment and keeping everything above board and with transparency. Thank you.

HELEN PURCELL: Item number 6.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

HELEN PURCELL: To enter into a Section 85 agreement with the provision of social housing via a Public Private Partnership, Bundle 5 of the National Social Housing PPP programme (report attached).

JOE LANE: There was a report circulated. We have used them in the past. Bundle 1 was used successfully on convent land and has been up and running for two to three years.

Bundle 3, we were included in or have included the lands in Blessington. That's out to tender at the moment.

In 2022, we were asked to submit bundles for Bundle 5. I will come back to Bundle 6 in a second. We submitted the lands at Burnaby in Greystones and [inaudible] in Bray. Both of these schemes are larger schemes and this furthered us an opportunity to submit them as mechanism. So the Burnaby site, we reckon 160 units and [inaudible] land, we submitted it with social houses of 70 and older person units of 50, which would be supported or wardened service, and 80 affordable. We have spoken to both municipalities on these early on. So, the PPP is an opportunity where as submitted, an entity advertises the projects of design and build on a 25-year maintenance period afterwards. I'm recommending same.

Bundle 6 has been submitted and it is the site down in Arklow. So, this would be to augment our supply. I'm recommending this.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Joe. Cllr Flynn-Kennedy.

CLLR FLYNN-KENNEDY: Sorry, Cathaoirleach, could I excuse myself? I work for the approved housing body. I'm not sure if they're part of any of this. In case it causes a conflict, I will step out.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Behan.

CLLR BEHAN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Thanks to the Director for the report. In fact, I'd make a point at the very outset that the wording of the Section 85 agreement, the wording of the motion doesn't even appear on the agenda which I think is not proper order at all. If you didn't read through the documentation that was sent to us, you wouldn't find out what is proposed here is two large areas of land which we own, as a local authority in Wicklow, we're effectively if we vote for this today, we're effectively voting this out of our control completely. We're voting to pass it on to Dublin City Council, not even Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, Dublin City Council to advertise it for private developers to come in and build the houses in both locations. These two sites were submitted by the officials to the department without any reference to us, we never agreed it, we never discussed it. It was taken out of our hands and sent to the department and the department officials in conjunction with the officials here at Wicklow County Council decided, yeah, that's grand, the land in the Burnaby and the land in Bray, we will put that into a public private partnership, we will get Dublin City Council to manage the difficult problems associated with putting something like that. Effectively we will take it out of the control of Wicklow. Now, it's very important for us to understand, we don't have to agree to this. We vote for this, we are opting out of providing social and affordable housing as a housing authority here in Wicklow. When I did read the small detail and print in this, I rushed out an amendment by email to all of you, I hope all of you online have it via email, I printed it out here, and out of courtesy I have sent it to the directors.

I feel very strongly we should not support this proposal. We are a housing authority, we're very, very little powers left, as we know. I know I'm like a broken record saying this, but we have very much real powers left. One of them is to keep control of our housing policy, both affordable housing and social housing. I, for one, am not willing to allow Dublin City Council to take over the running of this council by any shape or means. So, I'm appealing to members, please, do not do this. Do not vote for this. Vote instead for the amendment that I've proposed. I'm looking for a seconder, if anybody's willing to second it, that we keep this as our housing authority and our project and we make the decisions about the division between the affordable housing and social housing, whether we are going to have old people's units, disabled person's units, et cetera, what the layout is going to be in terms of open space, all of the other factors that go into deciding on a housing scheme. We have very, very

few sites of this size left. There's 11 acres of land in Bray, it's the biggest site left in council public ownership. If the members vote for this today, effectively we've lost control of it.

What's worse, a private developer will be picked by Dublin City Council after a tendering process. We won't have any involvement in that. A private developer will then have control over the building and all of the arrangements up for the next 25 years, so effectively for most of us that will mean it's forever.

I think as public representatives, a year before we go and we face the people of this county, to come and say to them, listen, we know we've reduced powers but we actually did have the power to decide on our housing policy and we did have the power to decide on housing schemes in our own county, and how they're going to be delivered. We gave that away, because the officials felt it was the right thing to do. It's not the right thing to do. It's the wrong thing to do. Members, colleagues, I would appeal to you to support my amendment and not to support what the Director is proposing here. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Behan.

Joe Lane, Director of Service, do you want to come back in there?

JOE LANE: Just before people come to talk. I want to clarify a few things. We will always own the site. It is only being given as a licence to everybody. We are never handing over part of the site. We also don't leave the committee. Dublin is a contracting authority to enable the entity, like we had in convent land, to develop the scheme. So, Dublin would be the one who would be the contracting entity. However, there is a steering group and a working group. I'm on the steering group, as are the directors of Kildare and Sligo in Bundle 1, the other ones depending on who is on each of it, inevitably it is a director that attends it. We have a working group, we have a senior technical person in each working group. We don't walk away from this. This is an entity to develop it. One other thing. When we did, in December last year when we went through the housing delivery plan, I detailed 7% of the supply going forward will be through PPPs, this is an extremely important part of the delivery option. It's an option for delivery. We're not handing over every control. They are the ones that just want to clarify on those particular ones.

Again, it is not a private developer. It is an entity. So, what happens is, like in the Blessington one, that's currently advertised, they advertised for basically three companies. One company who will build, one company who will operate and the third company who provide the finance, these are very, very big schemes and like I said have worked successfully in convent land, ourselves in and the Wicklow County Council will bear testimony to that.

Now, just, if you don't mind, a few other things. There are a number of other advantages to PPP, not only is it Government policy but also in these particular places it provides a masterplan for both the schemes, even though the affordable housing is only part of it, the consultants will provide no cost to the County Council will provide a masterplan and consultancy and we'll be talking to both municipal areas on that. They also with the companies involved in it, they provide expertise in procurement, and project management. It allows us, Wicklow County Council, on top of it, it allows the housing delivery is challenging at the best of times and it allows a different group to provide extra work on top of all of the other ones, of all of the other schemes that we do here. So, it extends the supply chain.

Wicklow County Council would be perceived as one of the bigger local authorities and there's a reason for that. We look across all delivery options and we attempt to spread the load, I suppose, across entities or across opportunities that are available.

The supply of Wicklow -- Wicklow would be acknowledged as one of the better ones supplying units across a variety of vehicles. That was acknowledged by none less than the Taoiseach at the time last September when he indicated in a recent visit to Wicklow County Council that Wicklow was exemplar in its approach and delivery of homes using innovations and collaboration with partners to ensure early delivery; that is acknowledged. That solid partnership across all ranges not only allows us to have a strong supply and we were in a position to switch the green hill site from social to affordable because we have so many across that stream. I won't list. This allows to augment that and produce extra units. I hope that produces maybe a better understanding of the PPPs. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Director. Cllr Rory O'Connor.

CLLR O'CONNOR: Thank you very much, Cathaoirleach. Just two questions. I know reading this document is a big thing is value for money. My preference would be having these places in our control and us doing the building and what not. What is the difference in cost compared to traditionally us doing it versus them doing it? Like, is it very slim or is there a huge difference but that would be pretty important to know? My second question would be about tenants paying while in the social housing would that go to us or to the PPP people? My fear if it is coming to them, we have to be ruthless with arrears. I feel like if a private company is involved they won't be as nice about it, you know. That's all, thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr O'Connor. Cllr Derek Mitchell.

CLLR MITCHELL: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Yes, I have just a couple of questions about this, part any general and partly specific. The specific one, the site which is called the Burnaby in Greystones, I believe there's a permission for 100 or 150 houses or so. I remember that at the time this was designed, I think there was a part 8 on it at the moment, I'm not quite sure, but there was a lot of discussion with the housing section about which houses would be social houses and which houses and how many would be affordable houses. There was all sorts of questions from the neighbouring estate and assurances were given about overlooking and various other things to do with quite detailed design features. I'm wondering do those still apply in this case. I'm just concerned if they don't, because I know the issue was very contentious some years ago when I thought we ended up with a design for this particular estate. The other aspect is, who will nominate the people? Will they come from the Wicklow County Council low social housing lists, for instance, in Greystones? Also my understanding is if there is something to be 50% affordable houses in the Burnaby one, will they be subject to this requirement puts in in Wicklow, the 30%, I think were allocated to Wicklow or more local people. So is that, will they just be going to people that Dublin City Council nominates? I'm not clear on that. We be concerned if there was a wider allocation of it than we had to under the legislation. I mean, I understand, I think the maximum for local affordable is 30%, but I think we should maintain the right in the Greystones and Bray site to do the same.

I'm just a little bit unclear about why it has been given to Dublin City Council, is it we don't have the amount of staffing needed to do this or what the reason is. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Peir Leonard.

CLLR LEONARD: I suppose, I would have huge concerns over the direction that we're heading in and I know that there's a huge crisis. That crisis hasn't come overnight. It is not because of a natural disaster or something like that. It is almost as if the policy has been directing us to this so that, you know, we end up in a situation where we have no housing for people and we have all of these housing bodies and with the most well-meaning people in the world setting up charities to house people, this should be coming from us. We should be the body that is housing people. We should be the bodies that is providing services to people. Where's the oversight going to come in years to come where our centre of control has moved further and further away and privatised and given away? Like, where is democracy going to come in then when there's a problem down the road? I would have huge concerns over the direction we're heading.

I have seen lots of housing developments and I have seen Wicklow County Council do housing developments, state-of-the-art developments with great construction and design teams on our own public lands. I don't see any reason why we can't continue to do that. We need the right resources. I don't think this is the direction we should be heading. It is up to all of us to make sure for the future generations that we see this for what it is and I know we need housing but we need to do it in the right way and we need to have a longer-term vision for this, because this will not bring us to a good place in the long term, the long-term vision. I'd be happy to second Cllr Behan's amendments to the Section 85 agreement. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Leonard. Cllr Stephen Stokes.

CLLR STOKES: Go raibh mile maith agat. This reminds me, I lived in the UK for six years. I remember, you know, vividly a lot of the London Borough Councils used to basically house people at the opposite ends of the country in places like Middlesbrough, Sunderland and Stoke. Where I lived in Bury, in north Manchester, Salford City Council had bought a whole lot of lands, built houses and Bury was expected to look after them without getting any finance for it essentially. I'm having visions of this with Dublin City Council.

We know in Dublin, they have not looked after their own needs there. This is my big concern with this. It is what level, if any, will Dublin City Council have on housing the people? We need Wicklow homes for Wicklow people. I would be supporting Cllr Behan's motion here because I would like clarity as to what is going to be the level of involvement of Dublin City Council housing people from their list in County Wicklow.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr John Snell.

CLLR SNELL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I suppose it is frustrating really in regards to the level of questioning and I suppose, look it, we don't all have the answers. The truth is that, you know, this is not something that we haven't done before in regards to PPPs. Under Section 85 of the agreement for the provision of social housing, this is a national scheme. We've done it here in Wicklow and it's been very successful in our particular area, in East Wicklow. Actually it got an awful lot of people who otherwise would be still at the mercy of private landlords. We know that the private sector is creaking under the pressure in regards to the private rental market. When the embargo is lifted, even more pressure will be there. I'm sure you are dealing with people every day of the week who are on notice to quit. The reality is that this is providing units in the Greystones and Bray area where they're badly needed. This is not something that has just appeared overnight.

To answer one or two queries and it's not my position to answer it but I feel obligated to do so, 100% nomination rights come from Wicklow County Council, so for your fears to support the amendment, I believe it is unfounded. The reality is that 100% of the people will come from our local authority list. That's the policy.

Dublin City Council is only a vehicle to drive this, the bundle, that's all it is. It is only a vehicle to produce and it alleviates our staff to get on with producing the other housing needs that we're looking to meet. We have tried and tested every available option to it and that's why when the Director talks about the then Taoiseach of the country commending Wicklow County Council. We come in 100% above our targets last year, provided over 650 units to people on a social waiting list, unheard of, unheard of and unequalled by any other local authority in the land. I would fear that councillors through lack of knowledge or certainly, if you have a question, ask it and listen to the answer, but the reality is that don't slow down the supply of units to people who are on our waiting list, in our county, who need roofs their heads, because the reality is there's so many out there struggling and struggling through no faults of their own because landlords are getting out of the private market. They're getting out of the private market because, unfortunately, the price of units is so high now that they're saying it's time to cash in their chips and get out.

This has been tried and tested in this Local Authority. It's been very successful, as other councillors from my municipal district I'm sure will speak on, and say I'm 100% supporting this. Indeed, I want to propose it here, Cathaoirleach, today. Please, please just ask the question of the officials at the top table before you come to any decision because don't delay this scheme that provides units in Greystones and Bray because of a lack of clarity.

With regard to design and overlooking of housing units, that's a planning decision. It doesn't matter if it is a private house, a social house, and affordable house, they still have to concur with the planning laws of this country. So, I don't see the relevance of whether it's a social house, affordable house or a private house. Some people might want to look in over your garden and some won't and some do ... I think that's unnecessary.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay.

CLLR SNELL: To sum up, this local authority has supported this on numerous other occasions. It is a national policy and if you can speed up or give guarantees by going against this that you're not going to delay people getting a social house or an affordable house through going against what is in front of us, well, I don't see any guarantees on the



table to say that. I know for a fact that we will delay and delay and, unfortunately, the people who are waiting on houses out there can't be delayed anymore.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Snell. Cllr John Mullen.

CLLR MULLEN: I'll be brief as possible, because in fairness Cllr Snell and most of my queries and confirmed, like, Wicklow is one of the best performing local authorities in the country on the delivery of housing which is an extraordinary achievement, and in fairness, down to the decisions that the people are making to be pragmatic and in the middle of a crisis, while I'm sympathetic to Cllr Behan's general argument over losing control over housing delivery, I think it's probably a little bit exaggerated in this case, in the sense that this is the middle of a housing supply crisis. I'll say that again. It's a housing supply crisis. The quickest way to resolve a housing supply crisis is the delivery at speed of quality local authority housing.

In fairness to Joe Lane and his team, I wouldn't have always agreed with him, we would have robust exchanges on some issues, but we have to advance with speed the delivery of units. This is a mechanism that has been tried and tested public in the county to deliver at speed quality housing and that's what the people of County Wicklow want us to do in this Chamber. I will be supporting it on that basis, while I'm sympathetic at the same time to the general theoretical argument about the powers of local authorities.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Mullen. Cllr Lourda Scott.

CLLR SCOTT: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I think some of my questions have been answered, and just re-reading the Section 85 agreement as well just in terms of allocation of housing and management of the houses once they're built.

Just a very brief question. I suppose my question is if we don't go ahead with this scheme, what happens next? How much of a delay will that cause? Where are those houses had, social and affordable houses left and when can we expect them to come on stream? If we're asking that Wicklow County Council designs, builds and finances and operates those, affordable schemes ourselves, which I agree in principle with, I have to say with Cllr Behan, bearing where we are at the moment and speed, as Cllr Mullen said, is of the essence.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Scott. Cllr Gerry Walsh.

CLLR WALSH: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. On a point of clarification in relation to the site mentioned there by Cllr Mitchell in the Burnaby area of

Greystones. I know he referred to an original design presented to the members back in 2019 which involved private and social. I assume the new design that's been proposed for this scheme will be presented to the municipal district members in due course and also just looking at the document here in relation to the roles of Dublin City Council and the exceptions and the nominations, I assume that the rents accruing there won't be going to the project company and will be coming back to the Local Authority. Just clarification on that.

At the end of the day, it is a national scheme, with the full support of the department, for us to reject this I think, you know, we would be turning down the opportunity to have much needed social and affordable housing which we have been crying out for God knows how long now.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Cllr Walsh. Cllr Dermot O'Brien.

CLLR D O'BRIEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. For me, it was quite comprehensive, the report. There was a lot of detail there, which, again, you have to kind of, as Cllr John Snell said I suppose, if you have questions, you should ask them.

As I'm reading it, I'm wondering about the principle of the PPP itself and is there profit at the heart of what drives these type of arrangements, so sits a little bit uncomfortable with me.

Cllr Scott asked the question I was going to ask. Is it PPP or nothing, is that what we're facing in terms of this decision? Because we do have to, I suppose live in the reality of what people expect from us and that's challenging and interesting, but we're accountable support that hand we can't avoid that.

So, yes, I'm curious about the risk benefit analysis that was done for this, again as a way of encouraging us to take this on boards. Is there a strategic dimension that is positive rather than one will carry concern all of the way through? Again, can it be done by Wicklow County Council if it is not done as a PPP? Thanks.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Dermot O'Brien. Cllr Erika Doyle.

CLLR DOYLE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Yes, similar to some others, I would like to know what happens if this does not pass today, what exactly happens?

And I would also just like to -- if your questions are answered in relation to rents and allocations, maybe if you're thinking of voting against it, maybe examine why, particularly if you're not in the district that this affects. I would need to think long and hard about voting against housing

for constituents of, say, Arklow, for example, where I'm not dealing with those constituents and I'm not hearing from people who are desperately in need of housing every single day. I really think these schemes are plans for Bray and for Greystones, so I would hope that the members in the other districts would have a very exact knowledge of the situation in those areas before voting on this.

Again, we are desperately in need of housing. I'd like to know if this vote doesn't go through today, what would this mean, what exactly would this mean? If it is delayed, how long would it be delayed for? If all the other questions are answered, I think we're based on an ideology versus reality situation and in a housing crisis, we need to think very carefully about that.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Doyle. Cllr Sylvester Bourke.

CLLR BOURKE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. If this can speed up the housing delivery of our County Council's housing programme, we should go for it. I'm disappointed that the Arklow scheme is not included in this. There's a promise of 100 houses for Arklow under this scheme. I'd like some clarification on that, that if this scheme proposed today get delayed would it have a knock-on effect on the one coming down the track behind it? So, maybe the Director could let us know what the effect, the knock-on effect would be, but in principle, it would be great if the council could do it themselves naturally. But that takes forever. It's excruciatingly difficult to get approvals for the Department of the Environment for our own housing projects. It takes two or three years to get through the hoops and different stages. It is ridiculous. If this can speed up and cut through the red tape, I will go for it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Bourke. Cllr Gail Dunne.

CLLR DUNNE: In Wicklow we had the PPP that the councillor has alluded to. 52 houses were built quickly on land that was wasteland. Now we have 52 families homed up there. It was excellent. Built very quickly. I am probably long-term, when I worked in Wicklow County Council, I saw our delivery of housing and how slow it was and through no fault of their own. It was a slow process like. You went out for planning and then you had to go to tender. You had to go get the staff members in to build the houses and it took such a long time. This process has speeded things up in the middle of a housing crisis where houses are badly needed.

I am not from Greystones or Bray, but I am a member of Wicklow County Council and delivery of houses, to me, whether it's in my area or outside of my area is crucially important. In my opinion, no matter where it is, if we can speed up the delivery of houses, to the people on the waiting list, I am sure the director will, I think 4,500 people on the housing list in our

area. Like, surely that is a good thing. I understand Cllr Behan's worries and things, but for me, it's all about housing. And getting people into housing as quickly as possible. So I will be supporting the PPP.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Shay Cullen.

CLLR CULLEN: I will be brief. For me this Section 85 agreement is about providing homes for the people of this county of Wicklow as quickly as possible. I think that is a simple way of putting it. I do have some sympathy in terms of our powers being eroded that Cllr Behan has mentioned. But I think that is not something that we can change just at the moment. I feel that we are sort of in some respects, we have no choices here, because of the supply crisis that we are facing. I have major concerns over the delays in providing homes. So anything to, I suppose slow down the supply of housing, for me, would be certainly a negative. So it's all about providing homes as fast as possible. I would have to compliment Cllr Snell on his contribution. We, in Wicklow District, have obviously had a very successful PPP on the convent lands, that has definitely proved very successful and a lot of other housing developments we have done through our different forms through Wicklow Municipal District. As he said this is tried and tested and proven. For that reason I will be supporting this Section 85 going forward.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Cullen. Cllr M Kavanagh.

CLLR M KAVANAGH: Thank you. I just want clarification on something. One of the key features of PPPs is that they are required to hand back the assets to the State at the end of the 25-year operating period. Does that mean that these houses will then become assets and owned by Wicklow County Council? And, as regards, we will say paying for them, the private partner takes on the full construction and funding risk, but obviously they do that for a reason. It's an investment. So when the houses are built, will it be Wicklow County Council that is paying for the building of them, essentially? I just want some clarification on that. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Miriam Murphy.

CLLR MURPHY: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I suppose some questions that have been asked, but I will go at it another way around it. I am just wondering how other County Councils have taken up the offer on this. I am sure it's been spread nationally and where was the pitfalls and the advantages. I do agree with the length of time that our own County Council can build houses and I agree with that. I hate the word, I hate people saying, "*Oh, they can be built up quick.*" My version of a quick house can be quite, are they built to high quality? I am sure they are, but how long will they be maintained? Also, will there be a liaison office he in place? How long would that appointment be? Because as you know

there will be a lot of teething problems when new houses come on board. How long will that relationship be there for. Also, will there be houses for people with disabilities, included in that scheme? And when the scheme is coming to our district, how much communication will the members in that district have, in response to that?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Murphy, Cllr Edward Timmins.

CLLR TIMMINS: Just briefly a question. Was this brought to the members of the respective districts, Bray and Greystones? If not, was there any reason why it wasn't brought to them. If it was, was there any outcome from the consultation?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Vincent Blake.

CLLR BLAKE: Thank you, chairman. Thank you for the presentation as well. Look it, throughout the whole country here we have been talking about PPPs over quite a number of years. The whole roads programme in this country was done on PPP. I don't see anyone refusing to drive any of the motorways or taking the byroads because of charges. So I am perfectly happy and supportive of anyone coming in here and helping us in Wicklow. Dublin City Council and others who are able to come in and work with us. There is a desperate need for them. As the chair of the housing SPC has said, we have surpassed our expectations and demand for housing. Time and time we have delivered in Baltinglass and Carnew and Blessington. It's surpassed any expectations and we are continuing to build them. So I am perfectly happy to support the building of houses in the Bray and groves area for the people who need them in the area. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Blake, Cllr Patsy Glennon.

CLLR GLENNON: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Look, a lot of the concerns I had have been addressed by Cllr Snell and Director Joe Lane. I fully support the motion and the Section 85, as proposed by the director of housing. I don't think anyone has seconded Cllr Snell, so I like to formally second that Section 85 as proposed by the director of housing as is passed by this chamber today.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Pat Fitzgerald. Yeah, I will be supporting the Section 85 agreement. I think, I mean we need to get houses. The figures for the county are colossal to be honest about it, despite the work of the housing staff. So I will be proposing that we enter into the agreement.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Fitzgerald. Cllr Gerry O'Neill.

CLLR O'NEILL: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I joined the debate a little late. I fully understand where Cllr Behan is coming from. We have something similar in Blessington where there are 130 houses being built by Dublin Corporation on public lands. I am not too happy with that and I think the gun is put to your head at a certain point, where it's housing, housing housing. We have also been informed that the 25-year lease, the Housing Agency, so we will get the land back in 25 years. How many of us will be around in that time, I don't know. I am not really happy with it. I don't, I would much prefer to see Wicklow County Council building those houses.

Again, as I say, the pressure is on and the houses are needed and in talking to the ordinary Joe Soap on the side of the road, I think once they get a roof over their head nowadays. It's a pity we were going down this road, but anyway, we are and that is it, more or less.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Cllr Gerry O'Neill. Can I bring in the Chief Executive now, please, Brian.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Just to, before I hand over to Joe, just to provide a bit of clarity. To say we have no control over this scheme is not correct. Dublin City Council are just the lead authority for this particular bundle. Other local authorities are leads for other bundles. It could have been any one of the six local authorities in bundle five that could have taken the lead role in relation to this. Dublin City Council have the resources in order to do that and we are glad to allow them to do that to free up our resources to concentrate on working on other schemes. As Joe said, we have representation on the Steering Group as well as the Project Working Group. So we do have control and input into this particular scheme. The PPP scheme provides value for money and it expects delivery of social and affordable housing. I think that is what we all want. Also the Section 85 agreement as Cllr Blake said, it's a standard practice within the local Government sector. We have done it for roads projects and for our public lighting. It's just a standard normal practice that we use across the whole local government sector. It shouldn't be something that anyone is afraid of. So as pointed out by Cllr Snell, we have previously supported and agreed two other PPP schemes, which have been successful. So, look, at the end of the day, we are in the middle of a housing crisis. So I would implore the members here today to agree to this scheme, which has previously proven to be successful in the past. I am sure it will be successful in relation to this particular bundle. Thank you.

JOE LANE: Can I just clarify one other thing. Again, people have been referring to Wicklow, so rather than explaining what will happen, I will explain what did happen in Wicklow and again Wicklow Council might help me, because I will miss some of the units. In the Wicklow area, because we were able to augment this, Wicklow County Council developed a scheme 40, we were able to do a small infill in the FCA close to the town of

eight. [INAUDIBLE]... which was a design building, Declan will correct me, it could have been the second in the cup. The second one was also in Baltinglass. That allows 41 units. We will be going back to phase 2 there. We then, we bought units from a private developer in Bollarney, so that augmented our supply. We have an approved housing body working in conjunction with us. Because he allowed us, instead of us taking the units he had to give us part 5 plus. That created extra units in Ashford. So on top of our supply we were then able to do another 52 with the convent land. So while we were doing this, they were doing that. It's the same and thank, Cllr Gerry O'Neill, but I couldn't even remember, it's the very same in Blessington. We had to delay a bit because of the lack of sewage. While we were doing that, we were doing Baltinglass and Shillelagh and at the same time we are getting the PPP bundle. So it augments the supply. So the growth, because it moves. In our housing delivery plan we did last December and that is why I am saying it's moved. We had 28 schemes, with 440 of our own. This allows me build another 150-200 units on top of our 440. So that is why we are exceeding across all categories. Okay, so that might have got in context and again the Wicklow County Councillors will help me if I missed units. Because I got the minimum there. So it strengthens it. The value for money for us, it's being done for us. But so is the housing scheme. So really there is no. When they looked at the leases and some of the other units, the Irish Government, economic and the IGES looked at a couple of Spending Reviews. They haven't looked at the PPPs yet, but we are quite happy, the way it's being achieved down there. We are in convent land. You will, going back to the design, the Burnaby site was of its time two years ago. There was no part 8 processed. The elected, the consultants who have been appointed will be given details of that, but bear in mind there is a new development plan and we may get new units there. They will be back to you.

We will give them our plan, but in conjunction with yourselves we might design something better there. It's unfortunate that the PPP does not do affordables. However they will design for us. Again it allows Wicklow County Council staff to augment the supply. I think I am jumping a question here. Arklow is included in bundle 6, not bundle 5. We put it in as bundle 5, it didn't pass, it has passed bundle 6. So that will be back to you on that. The rent is given to the... in this case the, there is... in the case... in convent land. But it's included in part of the arrangement. So they have to tender for all of that and, yes, they get a payback effectively for 25 years from the State, not from Wicklow County Council. So we don't get involved in that, however we are landlord. That is kind of an important protection there. Again, at the back, at the back of the report it said quite clearly, but I will say, just to be clear, Wicklow County Council nominates everyone. Nothing to do with Dublin. Dublin is only doing the contracts. Someone has to do the contract and be the contracting entity and someone has to sign contracts. Someone has to go through the procurement process and someone has to be the lead there. That is

where Dublin is there. They arrange the meetings. However it's the Steering Group and a working group. I am on one, one of the senior engineers, depending on what group and what scheme we are is on the other one and we are working on that. Value for money, there is the steering board is fairly heavy and fairly value heavy for money. This has all been gone through. There is a process auditory on the committee because of the sheer size. That is in accordance with the public expenditure code. So that control is there. Again, the affordable schemes we don't even know what the affordable house will look like. At the moment it will be delivered by Wicklow County Council, we will have to see whether it's going to be cost rental or affordable, what works there. It has nothing to do with Dublin. Again it will be the same scheme and priorities, as I indicated last November and the last day. Once we have better information we will be back with the scheme of priorities if we need to revisit it. I am not convinced we do need to revisit it because it appears that 60-70% of the recent Greenhill people are from Wicklow anyhow. We will come back to that later on. I think that covers everything. Like I said, there is a control there. Dublin are the contract entity.

Someone has to be the contracting entity in this. We initially thought, when I was involved in bundle 1, we initially thought it could be the department, but they had difficulties being a housing authority in that context and therefore Dublin came in. I think, I stand corrected if someone wants to Google it. I think bundle 2 is Cork city and I think bundle 4 is Galway. We didn't get the scheme on that. Like I said it's pushing our scheme from 440 up to 600, 700. That is why we have a strong delivery in Wicklow. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Joe. Cllr Behan, do you want to come back in there?

CLLR BEHAN: Just a final reply, if I could, Cathaoirleach, because I want to read out my amendment which states that Wicklow County Council designs, builds, finances, maintains and operates social and affordable schemes in the Burnaby and areas in Bray in fulfilment of its usual role as the housing authority for the county of Wicklow. Wicklow County Council rejects the Section 85 agreement proposed by the Chief Executive to hand over the above housing functions to a public-private partnership company, facilitated by Dublin City Council. I reject any suggestion that by looking to maintain control over our housing policy in this county that I am against building of houses. That is absolutely not the case. Anyone who knows me knows that is not the case.

But what I am saying is that we have had those sites for the last number of years. I have every confidence in the staff of the housing department. They should have got on. I mean I am asking about Rehills land for three or four years at this stage. It could have been done by the Council. We



could be in a situation where we have those houses built. A decision was made at executive level and not to proceed and to wait for something like this to come instead.

This PPP while it might be great-sounding at the moment. Look at it from the point of view of the Government.

The Government are getting this allegedly for nothing, but there is going to be a huge annual payment made to whoever are the successful bidders in this that will go on for 25 years. Joe Lane said and I wrote down his exact words:

*"The Committee are fairly heavy on value for money."*

What does that mean? How do we know what value for money means, unless we know what they are actually going to be paid for running it? We have also heard confirmation, although we are going to be the landlords, allegedly, the rent is, going to go to the entity, the company who is benefitting from this. There is nothing wrong with profit, fine, profit is great, it runs a capitalist society. But making profit a provision of housing is something I would have a problem with. And we, if we vote away our rights on this, we are going to just basically say, wash our hands of it and leave it to Dublin. What happens if Dublin decide they are going to prioritise one county over another. No point in talking about it here, we have lost control. So Cathaoirleach, I am appealing to the members, it is not a question of being against building of houses. That is rubbish. I actually want to see the houses built quicker. In my view the staff of Wicklow County Council could do that just as quickly as Dublin City Council. On that basis, I want to propose my amendment and I thank, Cllr Leonard for seconding it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Cllr Behan.

JOE LANE: Dublin City Council can't drop a scheme out of it. There is a particular bundle 5 and bundle 6 now. That is the scheme. So Dublin can't drop or determine that. On top of that, people remember the success of convent land. It was, because of the way it was, it was scheduled quicker than the rest, so it was one of the earlier schemes. It's just the way a project works. So like I said, sorry, one other thing, if people look at the Chief Executive's report and the list of what was delivered, all of this was delivered across it's county because we are able to augment our supply with another supplier. If you are doing Rehills or something else, you are not doing something else, it's as simple as that. That is why we are trying to augment and strengthen it. That is why when I say 440. We had 440 plus the PPP brings it up well over 700. That is why we are recommending this. It's another supply to approved housing body, it strengthens it. And all of the members will Ben Flight Lieutenant from improved housing body

and the way they are complementing the local authority and taking people on the list, which is clearing the list down.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Joe. Cllr Edward Timmins.

CLLR TIMMINS: There was a number of questions asked by different councillors that weren't answered. I asked the question had this been brought to the respective districts? That wasn't answered. I know other councillors had questions about if you don't vote for it what are the implications. Those questions weren't answered and a number of ones weren't. Just my particular one, anyway.

JOE LANE: I thought I got them, sorry. The original plans, which was Burgage and Rehills. Those schemes were, the PPP that has been brought here has been brought on the agenda through the housing delivery plan and we have discussed it at least twice. But the...

CLLR TIMMINS: Was this particular proposal brought?

JOE LANE: The Section 58 wasn't, it's for the full members.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, the other question was, if it's not voted for today what happens?

JOE LANE: Well we are part of a scheme, so Dublin City need to move on. Therefore we are not, we don't have a Section 85 so we have to wait, it delays the process basically. For us, if the ultimate and you choose not to do it, I have to go back to my Housing Delivery Plan. We have limited resource we, have been given approval. As everyone knows we have schemes on the ground, we have schemes at part 8, just gone to contract. But we have 24/25 schemes. We were hoping to have smaller schemes in place and this. If I am looking at Rehills, you are not looking at something else. You can call it scaremongering, that is what happens, something else drops out of it. At the moment we have a very strong supply. The target is 1,300 we are lining up for 1500. Something else has to come out of that. Again working on this as very fluid. But that is where it is at the moment. We need, this just strengthens our supply. It's someone else doing these schemes. Again, if you take Arklow. In Arklow what we plan to do is we would, there are, there is another, I keep calling it the right place, give me a hand here, Sheep's House, is it? Wicklow would be designing that while the PPP is moving ahead. So instead of having one scheme, you would have two to three schemes. That is why we try to get these people involved.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, thank you. Chief Executive.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Just quickly to highlight to the members that the value for money issue is highlighted under Section 4 of the agreement. It clearly states that, there is a number of key tests that are undertaken and against the successful tender, in comparison to the traditional method and model of delivering social housing. If the PPP tender is less than the cost of undertaking the project through traditional means, it's considered that the project offers value for money and the contract may then be awarded. So I think it's pretty straightforward that it's more cost effective than the traditional method.

CLLR BEHAN: [INAUDIBLE NOT SPEAKING INTO MIC]

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Sorry, councillor, let me finish. It says there are a number of key tests that are undertaken... if you actually read it, read Section 4, Cllr.

CLLR BEHAN: [INAUDIBLE]

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: It says if it's considered less than the traditional means then the tender is awarded. It's as simple as that.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I am going to bring in Breege Kilkenny.

BREEGE: I wanted to assure the members I was involved in the convent lands scheme when it was a PPP. Just in terms of the process. Today is what Joe has presented is the Section 85 to allow the project to proceed. I was a member of the Steering Committee, we met every month. If the Wicklow members remember, at all stages, prior to part 8, during part 8 it was brought to the members, where design issues, where there was any problem, I brought that back to the table, to the point at even in terms of the design that was being put forward by the consultants, we changed the design to, not to have a massive role going through that development. So at all stages, the councillors are involved.

And then, that other point that needs to be emphasised, this Council decides who goes into those houses. Nobody else. It's the allocation list is what applies. So I just wanted to clarify that. At all stages in terms of the design I was part of it. The big bonus is that we weren't using, what I would consider, wasting our resources, as Joe has pointed out, work on other schemes. There was somebody else doing that. And the big part of the lead authority is the whole procurement proceeds. That is the be all and end all of it all. That Section 85 was brought to the council. So just in terms of Cllr Timmins' question. Was it brought to the committee. Just this part of it hasn't been yet, because it's to allow the process to happen. But at all stages of the design, it will be brought to the MD. Isn't that correct, Joe?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, Cllr Murphy wants to come in there.

CLLR MURPHY: Sorry there. I think Breege has answered some of it. About bringing it to a district and the importance of bringing that to it. I suppose, my question is again so in that design, will there be people with disabilities accommodated in housing requirements specifically as well? Thank you, Breege.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr M Kavanagh.

CLLR M KAVANAGH: My question very briefly. Will these houses come back into the ownership of Wicklow County Council in 25 years' time, no strings attached?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Joe, will you take that question, please.

JOE LANE: Yes, it will, because they are on our land. We never gave away our lands. They will be coming back in 25 years. Disability, we will have to talk about the Arklow area about exact numbers but there will be, in all of our designs we accommodate disability units where possible. It depends what type of units, exactly and what type of disability, but there will be a percentage that will be sorted out at the design stage.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank You, Director. Helen, can I hand it over to you.

HELEN PURCELL: Section 85 of the Local Authority Government Act states that:

'The making of an agreement by a local authority in this section insofar as it relates to it is a reserved function.'

The proposal put forward proposed by Cllr Snell and seconded by Cllr Patsy Glennon is to enter into a Section 85 agreement for the provision of social housing via Public Private Partnership of the National Housing PPP Programme.

The amendment put forward proposed by Cllr Behan and seconded by Cllr Peir Leonard that Wicklow County Council designs, builds, finances, maintains and operates social and affordable housing schemes in the Burnaby in Greystones and Rehills land in Bray in fulfilment of its usual role as the how long authority for the county of Wicklow.

Furthermore that Wicklow County Council rejects the Section 825 agreement to hand over the above housing function and the above two sites to a public private partnership company facilitated by Dublin City Council is a direct negative of the Section 85 that is put forward. So it's a

for or against vote. So if you are in favour of the Section 85 as put forward by Cllr Snell and seconded by Cllr Patsy Glennon you vote for. If you are in favour of the proposal put forward by Cllr Behan and seconded by Cllr Peir Leonard you vote against. Is that clear?

CATHAOIRLEACH: That is clear.

CLLR BEHAN: [ INAUDIBLE NOT SPEAKING INTO MIC ]

CATHAOIRLEACH: I am going to bring you in there, Cllr Behan. Go ahead so we can hear you at home.

CLLR BEHAN: I have proposed an amendment. The first part of it is a positive statement about the role of this council as a housing authority. As far as I am concerned, the amendment must be put first and people vote for or against the amendment. If it falls, we vote on the other one.

ADMINISTRATOR: Cllr Behan is incorrect. Section 85 agreement contains the 10 sites that are expected to deliver and it makes reference to Rehills land in Bray and Burnaby in Greystones. Cathaoirleach, the process is, it is a for or against vote.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I have another light on from a Cllr Behan and Cllr Stokes.

CLLR STOKES: I wanted to concur with Cllr Behan. I believe there should be a separate vote for the amendment, and then if the amendment falls, there should be a separate vote on the overall package because I don't certainly, if falls, I don't want it to be said I'm against housing.

ADMINISTRATOR: No, Cathaoirleach. The item on the agenda is for to enter into a Section 85 agreement. The elected membership vote for or against it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay.

CLLR BEHAN: Are you not allowed to put forward amendments to motions now? Not only that, if you or I wanted to put forward a motion and it wasn't on the agenda, we would be told pretty quickly, where is the word of your motion. You had to look for it buried to find the wording. At the very least, take a vote on the amendment I submitted to in writing to the 32 members, please.

HELEN PURCELL: The Standing Orders state clearly, the amendment is not in order if it is equivalent to a direct negative or if it is not, in fact, an amendment of the motion to purports to the motion. It is a direct negative.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Is that clear enough, Cllr Behan?

CLLR BEHAN: You need to make a decision on this.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I will go for a vote on the Section 85. Okay, if that doesn't pass, it doesn't pass. Helen. Is everyone clear what we're voting on? We are voting on Section 85. Thank you.

[Vote taken]

CLLR DOYLE: I was dumped from the meeting. I missed the conversation in between. Can I check it is the same vote, if you are for or against ... [Problem with sound]

[Vote taken]

HELEN PURCELL: That's 24 for, 4 against, and 4 not present.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Helen. That's passed, then.

HELEN PURCELL: That's passed.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much for the good debate on that. Next on the agenda?

HELEN PURCELL: Next on the agenda Item 7, is to consider and adopt speed limit bye-laws for County Wicklow.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Director of Service, Leonora Earls.

LEONORA EARLS: I will give a brief background and context to the speed limit bye-laws. Thank you to all of the members who have engaged with us in relation to this matter.

So, local authorities are required to review their speed limit bye-laws on a five-yearly basis. The reasons for doing this includes safety, traffic management, education, and enforcement. So, speed limits are set by default and can only be changed on a permanent basis by the making of speed bye-laws. In this instance the making of speed bye-laws are a reserved function of the elected members.

So just to say that the default speed limits are set out there, what they are build up area of 50km, regional and local roads 80km, national roads 100km, motorways 120km.

Members, as you will be aware, during the engagement that we had with you, we set out the provisions of the guidelines for the managing and setting of speed limits in Ireland. They constitute a direction from the minister, so they are a statutory document. They're mandatory when it comes to the implementation. In this regard, it means that the executive were required to present the speed limits to you in accordance with these guidelines.

As you are aware, we engaged extensively with the members and other stakeholders. We started the consultation back in 2021 where we met with yourselves and An Garda Síochána, the district engineers, adjoining local authorities, and TII. TII have to give their consent to the amendment to speed limits on national roads within the county. They have done so.

The schedule of the proposed amendment should to the members in early 2022 for their review and consideration and we gave presentation he is in all of the districts. We then undertook public consultation in October/November 2022 and we received a total of 257 submissions from the public in that regard.

So, again we reverted back to the members in December 2022 and here we set out by district all of the submissions that we had received from the public. We set out the ones that we considered complied with the guidelines and we also set out the ones that we considered different comply with the guidelines. In the schedule document that we issued to you last Friday, appendix C was the one that contained the proposed amendments that we considered didn't comply with the guidelines. We had further engagement with each of the members late last week where we contacted you all. As a result of that engagement, there were some further amendments made and again these were circulated as one main document to the members on Friday. We did send an email this morning because there was one additional amendment submitted this morning and members would have got an email in relation to that.

So, what we have before you, members, are the draft bye-laws. There is 13 schedules included in them. You can see each schedule contains. Just to say in the 2nd schedule the 4th schedule, the 10th schedule, the 12th and 13th, there's no roads included for change within those schedules. So, it is the other schedules that you're considering here today. Now, a number of the councillors amendments and some of the submissions from the public, where they considered they complied with the guidelines have been included from these schedules. Again, it is only

the amendments that we didn't consider complied with the guidelines that are included in appendix C and there's 28 of those in total. Just to reiterate, we have to present the document in its current form because it is a statutory document and mandatory requirements on us as the Local Authority.

So, what's before the members today is to consider the draft bye-laws. You can consider them, the draft bye-laws with or without amendment. If they are adopted, we propose to do it in two dates. The first one will be 1st June, this will be all speed limits with the exception of the periodic speed limits at schools. The second date is 1st August, when the periodic speed limits at schools. This is simply because there's a body of work to be done in relation to the periodic speed limits at schools. So, we need a little bit more time to do that and have it in place ahead of the new school year.

As we mentioned during our engagement with you, there's an appeal process that open to all. It is, again, included within the guidelines. So, members, if the Cathaoirleach and the members are agreeable, I will just ask Brian, who would have done the vast majority of the engagement with you to briefly go through the amendments that are in appendix C and then we can open the floor to questions.

BRIAN: Good afternoon. As you are aware, we have done an extensive consultation with everyone. We tried to get as many of your amendments included in this document as much as we could and these are the ones that we feel that fall outside of the bracket of being in accordance with the guidelines. I'm going to propose to run through them district by district first and open it up to questions, if that's okay, Cathaoirleach.

Until the Arklow MD district, the Arklow MD, we have the Brittas Bay Road for an extension of the extra 50km to Seabank and Ashley Nursing Home. We have the Beach Road, the existing 50 towards Kilbride Church as Kinsella's shop; Thomastown Road, extending out into the rural area where there's a cluster of houses; the old N11 on the R77, reduced from the existing default limit of 80km to 60km, from the roundabout up past - there's about eight houses up on a bend. The Kilgraney and Ballyrattan work throughs, a 60km loop to the existing 50km to the roundabout, to create kind of a loop of 60km coming in and out of the town. And then the South Quay in Arklow to reduce from the 50km to a 30km an hour. We have Rathdown Main Street to reduce from the proposed 50km to a 30km from Saville's Cross all of the way out to the woods. The Meeting of the Water is to introduce the 60km limit on the R752 north and south of the amenity there.



So, Baltinglass MD, Hollywood, we were asked to extend the 50km limit out towards the new walk way that is going in for the direction of the Hollywood sign.

In Kilbride, we were asked to improve a 50km road on the crossroads at Oldcourt.

At Tinahely, we were asked to extend to the housing at Ballybawn. At Coolafunshogue, reduce from default limit to 60km/h. Vallemount, Lake Drive up towards N85.

Bray MD. We were asked to reduce Sidmonton Road to 30km for its entire length; Putland Road, the same. We were asked to introduce a 50km limit, a reduction from the default limit on Kilcrony Lane.

In Enniskerry, we were asked to extend from Curtleson past the school. At Kilmacanogue, we were asked to consider [inaudible]. In Greystones MD, Ballydonagh Templecarrick area, three different roads, to reduce from the proposed default limit to 50 kilometre an hour; to Kilquade Ballyronan limit, reduce from the default limit to 50 kilometre per hour, Kilcoole to Newcastle reduce from default limit to 60km.

The Wicklow MD, in the Glenealy area, from Coolberg to Killmacurragh Deputy's Pass, reduce from default limit to 60. Kilcandra introduce a 60km limit on its entire length.

In Newtown, we were asked to extend the 50km limits that runs from the Kilcoole/Newtown road out towards the dangerous bend there. We were asked to extend the 50km limit to cater for developments, so that's just up at Season Park, heading out towards the back road towards Roundwood.

Drumbawn, which is the back road to Roundwood, to introduce a 50km section from west of the bridge towards the Willow Grove Road. That was to facilitate walks and traffic calming requests.

In Wicklow Town, we were asked to reduce Ashtown Lane from the default 50km to 30km. For the entirety of the Brittas Bay Road, to reduce it from default limit to 60km/h.

The requests, the way they're shown up there is based on more or less what maps they fault into. There are some roads that would actually be in the Arklow area but they're down on Glenealy because that's the way the mapping worked out. I will open it back to you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Brian, to the presentation. Members, have you any questions? Cllr Stokes.

CLLR STOKES: I want to commend you and all of the team on many months of excellent work. I have to say that the level of client service that you provided over the last few months was absolutely exceptional. You know, I would write to you. We corresponded on a couple of occasions and you were often getting back to me in minutes. I just wanted that to be acknowledged on the record.

I'd like to thank everybody that's been involved in this in essentially making our county safer. I would like to really warmly welcome the amendments. You know, I was very vocal about the Ballydonagh Road, for example, and the concerns of the residents there, people were concerned at how close it was in proximity and how close it is in proximity to the N11. So, I feel like that a lot of the residents' concerns in the speed review have been addressed and I would like to just again thank you all for your excellent work.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Stokes. Cllr Peir Leonard.

CLLR LEONARD: I would also like to thank Brian and Michael. You're been so courteous and so respectful and so fast in getting back. I've been sending emails at all hours of the night and everything. I want to thank you for that.

On a point of clarification in relation to the L113, I know it is under Wicklow MD, I know myself and some of my fellow councillors and the residents would have put it through the Arklow MD. Just to acknowledge that but that's gone through then as just under Wicklow MD because of the mapping, is it?

CLLR P O'BRIEN: Yes.

CLLR LEONARD: Okay. One that seems to be missing off my list here, I don't know whether it has been okayed, was the wooden bridge, the reduction from 80km to 50km or 60km on the Woodenbridge. It is not on the list in front of me, I don't think. Is that because it's been sanctioned already? Thanks.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Brian, you're good to take another few questions? Thank you. No better man. Cllr Shay Cullen.

CLLR CULLEN: I will be brief. Thanks to Brian and Michael for all of their work done on this.

Just, Chairman, I want to be clear, do we need to propose these by MD? If so, I'm quite happy to propose the Wicklow MD. I have done a lot of work with Brian on that. I'm happy to propose that.

There is one item you might clarify, the Oldtown Road up to the cemetery, I couldn't see it on the list. Just to make sure that that was included. I think it was reduced to 50km/h.

My final point, is this the time, Cathaoirleach, to speak about the possibility of changing the zones in terms of the school areas to the 30 kilometres an hour, we're looking to do. I will come back in on that, if that's not now. If it is, I would like to speak on it, whichever you prefer.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Are we taking that later on? Take it now. Cllr Cullen, go ahead.

CLLR CULLEN: Thanks. I suppose, I think quite a lot of councillors have put forward proposals in terms of discussions with Brian and Michael over the last few months, surrounding schools across our county, and possibly the excessive speeds. I would say particularly in the more rural areas, I'm thinking about places like Moneystown in our own district, where you're up to 50km and 80km an hour passing a school gate. It is something that certainly to me needs to be addressed. The consensus at the time when this was being discussed we would probably have a periodic review in terms of the reduction in speed to about 30km/h, if that's correct. I certainly would be very, very supportive of that. I would go as far as to propose, if that's the case. I think anything we can do in terms of keeping the children safe through school times, whether it's a drop-off from the morning or a pick-up in the evening, I think we need do that. I think we'd be sending out a very, very clear message that safety is paramount when it comes to the safety of our children.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Cullen. Cllr Vincent Blake.

CLLR BLAKE: Thanks, Brian, for the work you've been doing you have done over the last probably years at this stage, and to the staff as well. I wasn't going to talk about the schools. We did discuss the school in Carnew, the schools in Carnew, where we have two national schools and a secondary school as well over a long distance along the actual Main Street of it. It may become a problem in terms of how to deal with that aspect of it.

To come back to my own area of Tinahely, one thing that I know we put forward in terms of Boleybawn, the residents there that proposed us in that regard. I know you were talking about extending it a bit further than what we were looking for to the farm place. We didn't get any requests to do that. I think that to go to the end. Houses, the five houses there, I think would be sufficient in that regard. Again, thanks for the work you have done in regards to it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Blake. Cllr Lourda Scott.

CLLR SCOTT: Thanks very much, Cathaoirleach. Very sincere thanks to Brian and Michael. I have to say of all of the consultation processes that I've been through since joining the council, the speed limit review has been one of the most enjoyable ones. I don't say that lightly! But just your engagement and your listening to the feedback from both councillors and members of the public has been exceptional.

You mentioned there, I just want to -- really I have to mention the huge public engagement from my own constituents in Greystones. The issue of safety and speeding around schools has been a massive issue in our district. I have witnessed myself very, very near fatal accidents occurring outside of one particular group of schools in our area, which my children attend. It's been a huge concern which I have raised before the speed limit review started, I have raised it to Michael, to our local office, as to how do we reduce the speeds around our school. Actually a motion to reduce the speeds in our district to 30km/h was passed unanimously by all of my colleagues on the district council back at the end of 2021. I'm actually delighted to see that the 30km/h are going through for all schools across the county. I believe we will probably be the first local authority possibly to introduce this. Out of the 257 public submissions I have to note that almost two of those were from the Greystones district and almost half of those submissions all related to bringing in 30km zones around schools and that is just a massive indictment of the level of support there is for that level of change for the speeds limits and also, like, Brian, I know you were both into the Greystones district and we were back talking about the importance of bringing this in and I know there were difficulties raised of various aspects from yourself. To be absolutely fair, you brought it back and yourself and Michael listened to what constituents were saying and what the public representatives were saying. I'm delighted to see this measure going through. This will actually save lives, more than any other change within this. I know there will be issues around enforcement, that's important too, but this really is a game changer when it comes to improving our children's safety coming to and from school. I just want to thank you for your engagement on that.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Scott. Cllr Mary Kavanagh.

CLLR KAVANAGH: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. First of all, thanks to Brian and Michael. I know I made a lot of submissions from even before 2021 because I know this process was delayed a bit. There's one in particular that I think I must have made at least three different submissions on behalf of the public on and that was the L113, which they requested be reduced from 80km to 50km. I see that it's in here in the amendments at 60km. I say that the reason was public consultations requested reduction

to 60km. But I just want clarification as to, you know, what was coming hard and fast at me was that the people who live out there and they had a whole committee of people and a whole load of people on board, was that they were really adamant they wanted 50km. I just want to know what the reason it went back up to 60km.

Secondly, one of the other ones that I was campaigning for was Ashtown Lane, which I'm delighted to see, and also the glen turn to Brittas Bay reduced from default limit but it doesn't say to reduce to what. So, if you could let me know what that is.

If we're doing this on a municipal district basis, I'm happy to second it. If we're going to vote individually, then that's okay, just let me know.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Kavanagh. Cllr Erika Doyle.

CLLR DOYLE: Yes, I would like to thank Brian and Michael as well for their engagement and their patience and their expertise around what might come from us as feelings or ideas or observations, but they have the expertise to sort of put a shape on it.

I'm delighted to see the support here from the majority, I presume maybe all of the members. We're such a car centric society and cars come first and when really they shouldn't. People should come first, particularly why young people. We all know that or I hope we all know if you're hit by a car at 30km/h, it averages out of that maybe one in ten people will be killed. If you are hit by a car at 50, it goes up to five in ten. So really, the 30km zone around schools is a no brainer and I'm delighted that we're doing that on a whole county basis.

Cllr Cullen, I think it was, remarked there about the speed in rural areas and how that can be quite fast. I suppose, some people have observed that in the likes of Bray, it's not possible to get up to that speed even sometimes. While I do take that on board, I think it's important that just as a sort of a cultural shift, we lower that speed and we let people know that, you know, you should always be driving slowly near schools. Now, enforcement, as somebody mentioned, is another thing. This is where maybe we will run into a bit of difficulty. I think we need to -- maybe we raise this at our next JPC, this is something that needs to happen. You know, these speed limits need to be enforced. The same as parking fines for disability zones, that kind of thing. It does need to be taken seriously and enforced.

The other one I'm pleased to see, even though it is not in my district, is the one on Ballyronan Road. I'm on Ballyronan Road a lot, my dad lives there and the speed limit was crazy, it is a dangerous enough road as it is.

I'm delighted to see the residential areas in Bray, where there's a huge amount of school children, and really 50km in a residential area feels very, very different to 50km on the likes of the N11. So, it is driver behaviour too as well as the actual speeds.

Again, like some of the others, if we're proposing by district, I'm happy to propose Bray. Thanks again to Michael and Brian for this. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Doyle. Cllr Gerry Walsh.

CLLR WALSH: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Thanks to Brian and Michael for their inputs and support into this process just on the Greystones Municipal District amendments, looking at points R, this is something that was in the last speed limit review, I would have proposed this back five years ago as a result of complaints in relation to motorists using it as a rat run to access the N11 particularly in the mornings. I have asked this time for Boley Lane to be added to that. If anything, the situation has been exacerbated with the new development from the area. We have had representatives from the Ballyronan Road. Again, with the new developments and the Newtownmountkennedy and at Delgany and Kilcoole area, that area has seen a significant increase in traffic and unfortunately, speeding.

Look, again, I would be posing if we're going by district, I would propose the Greystones MD amendments. Thanks for your support in this, Brian.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Walsh. Cllr Pat Fitzgerald.

CLLR FITZGERALD: Brian, the amendment, the Arklow map there [Problem with sound] ... to 60 ... 50, I discussed that with you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, Cllr Fitzgerald, can you speak into the microphone.

CLLR FITZGERALD: I am speaking. I thought it was a 50 we agreed there, to extend the 50 miles coming into Arklow? We wouldn't to increase it to 60km, Brian. Maybe it was a misunderstanding there, the Ballynatan Road.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Cllr Miriam Murphy.

CLLR MURPHY: Yes, thank you, Cathaoirleach. I like to thank Brian for their hard work. I am a bit confused which is not surprising! But on what Cllr M Kavanagh brought up, the R113. I mean that comes to our district as well. Is there two districts looking after that one main area? Because that has come up time and time again. They have loads of issues, regarding the speed limits. The accidents on it, and they are being thrown, I suppose from Billy to Jack. I am just wondering what district

does it officially rely on? Maybe I am wrong answering that, but I like to confirm it myself. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Murphy. Melanie Corrigan.

CLLR CORRIGAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach and thank you Brian and Michael for all the work you have done and the huge consultation on this. I just want to say, like a lot of some local communities have done a huge amount of work. It's great that this has been recognised in what has been put into the amendments there. I am talking in particular of the Kilcrone Lane. I know the group have done a huge amount trying to get the speed reduced. I know only part of it, implementing it is going to be difficult. But you have listened and supported them. At least it's gone some way to easing their worries. If this needs to be seconded I will be happy to second all the Bray MD amendments.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, thank you, members. I think everyone spoke expect myself. All I have to do... sorry, Cllr Gerry O'Neill.

CLLR O'NEILL: Sorry, Cathaoirleach. Just briefly, I wanted to thank the two lads here, Brian and Michael here. I thought the way they carried through this process was very good. It was consultation with councillors and it's nice to get a call from these lads to go over on different proposals and that. So I want to give full credit to the lads and their team for the way they approached it. We didn't get everything we wanted, but I just want to say well done.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Gerry O'Neill. That was a very good word, consultation. I was going to say, the lads came to Arklow and we had a heated debate, I would have said, but a consultation is a much softer word for that. So, gentleman, I would like to say thank you very much for coming to Arklow Municipal District and listening to all the points and taking them into account. As has been said, not everyone got what they wanted, but it's very well done and we are going to vote on it now. I believe. So thank you, Brian and Michael. And Leonora for that. Helen, are we going to take? Sorry, Brian, I apologise. Brian you have to answer a few questions!

BRIAN: First of all, I would like to thank you for your kind words. With regard to the listing of them they are based on the map they are referring to. The L113, it's in the Gleneely mapping, that is why they are there, in the schedule it's not broken down by MDs. The L113, the reduction to 60, the public consultation document I got from the residents actually asked for a 60. They didn't mention a 50. Now, it's up to you guys, you are more than welcome to change it, it's your prerogative. One that was the document I got during the public consultation process. I double checked it to be sure before we did that. Woodenbridge is a proposed 50. That will

be included. That is in the document itself. It's not part of an amendment. Oldtown will be a 50. Just talking about schools. So the document itself proposes period limits at any school that will not have a permanent 30km an hour limit. So basically if the school you are looking for isn't on the list in the periodics, it's because it will have a permanent 30 outside it already. So that goes for Carnew as well. Tinahely is an easy change to make in that.

The Glentarn to Brittas Bay, that is a change, on that it's a 60 so it will continue that 60 all the way through to Brittas. Dropping from 60, well it is an 80 at the moment, so it's dropping to a 60.

CLlr Fitzgerald, the Coolraney and Ballyratten road. It sounds like crossfire. My understanding is from an existing 60 you want it a loop back to 60. You want it as a 50. We will make that amendments.

CLLR FITZGERALD: Three schools on that road, the way the driving that goes on there it needs to be kept at 50.

BRIAN: This change is further out the town. As you go in towards the town it's 50-30. Outside the big schools.

CLLR FITZGERALD: I understand that.

BRIAN: So the 60 is going back out towards the rural area.

CLLR FITZGERALD: Kilranelagh. You are going past a graveyard.

BRIAN: Out further past that again. Where the current sign it's coming back down there southwest and then back down the Bali flatten road.

CLLR FITZGERALD: So that is going up to a 60.

BRIAN: It's an existing 80.

CLLR FITZGERALD: Coming down to 60. Sorry, misinterpreted that. I am proposing that.

BRIAN: I think that is everything, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Mary Kavanagh wants to come in there.

CLLR M KAVANAGH: I stand corrected. I have gone back to my notes from 2021, I see that the L113 was to reduce the speed limit from 80-60. They did want 50 but they felt they wouldn't get it so they asked for 60. I have it here. My apologies.



CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr R O'Connor.

CLLR O'CONNOR: Thank you very much and thank you, Brian, for your great communication skills. One thing I talked to you about, Brian and I have been doing a back and forth about it was the Kilmac National School. I think the 30 could go out more. I think maybe a periodic sign would be suitable there, if you could look into that and make an amendment.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Shay Cullen.

CLLR S CULLEN: Just a point of clarification. Just in terms of the periodic speed of 30km at schools. The link road leading to schools, how far out from an actual school gate are we proposing the 30km speed limit to come into effect? That is quite important from where a school gate is that you can have one, two, three, four roads leading into that school. So we need to clarify that for the public as far as I am concerned.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Brian, do you want to answer the last few questions, if you can.

BRIAN: Distance of the periodic, it varies school-to-school. So there is schools where there will be three different roads that will have a periodic limit on it. Say Moneystown will have a limited on the main road and the other road coming off it. It's a distance, generally in and around 100 metres each direction. Give or take. It does vary in every school. It has to be a site-by-site basis depending on the road geometry. Adding in Kilmac to the document that shouldn't be an issue, it will take time to draw it up though.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, Brian, thank you.

BRIAN: Just to say because that is a new amendment today, we will have to take time to map that now. So the members to write it up. So we won't be able to take a vote on the bye laws until that is done. So the team will need some time to do that.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, Leonora, how long do you propose the next meeting?

LEONORA EARLS: We can do it now, but if we could pause for a few moments or if you want to move on to the next item and we will come back.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Is that okay with the members? I am sure Brian and Michael will be delighted too, because all of the work they put into it, to

have to wait for another month. Anything quick on the agenda, Helen? No.

HELEN PURCELL: Okay, the quick item on the agenda is item number 11. To note circulars LG012023 declaration and public register and FO12023, 31st of January 2023 deadline for the reporting of political donations by elected members. Copies of both of those circulars were sent on a number of occasions to the elected members.

Really what I want to highlight is the reporting requirements due for 2023 are unchanged from those that applied in 2022. For political donations. The members have copies of the circular and the accompanying draft guidelines for elected members. Just to make sure that everyone complies with that. Then, in relation to LGO12023, annual declarations and public registers, the minister for housing local government and heritage wants to remind local authorities of the requirement, the ethical framework for local government service as set out under part 15 of the Local Government Act 2021.

This framework imposes a statutory duty annual in local Government services to maintain property standards of integrity and concern for the public interest. Employees and elected members are required to fill out annual declaration forms and the return period for submitting completed annual declaration to the ethics registrar is the last day of February each year. It should also be noted that the prescribed annual declaration form, includes a section for a person signing off to declare that they have read and understood the Code of Conduct for councillors as well as undertaking to have regard to it and be guided by the relevant Code of Conduct in his or her exercise of their functions. So that is just extremely important and I just want to draw it to the member's attention again. And then the other item that we have, we could do the Notice of Motion, the only other item is the Chief Executive's report which I doubt is going to take five minutes. We can start it and pause it?

CATHAOIRLEACH: No, if I was a gambling man I wouldn't bet on that.

HELEN PURCELL: Can pause it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Can we? Can I get the Notice of Motion? Can't skip the agenda... am I the Cathaoirleach. That is fair enough, Lorraine, your look says it all. We will go to the manager's report please, Brian. Lourda Scott. Sorry. Go ahead, Brian.

BRIAN: I will, before we kick off with the questions, just to highlight, obviously the main highlights are on page 5, where we identified that the launch of the school resources by archives and local study services took place here in county buildings last month and also highlighted the fact

that the extension of community and voluntary international scheme also provided additional funding for a number of Wicklow applicants. I just want to take the opportunity as well to highlight the fact that the application portal for the Greenhill Affordable Housing Scheme closed on the 30th of January.

I am pleased to report that 36 houses have now been offered out and also to state that approximately 75% of those offers have been made to Wicklow residents. So that is extremely good news. So while we are aware that the minimum level was set at 30%, the actual percentage is a lot higher, so I think that should provide comfort to all the members in relation to any future affordable housing schemes that would be looking at around the 75% of Wicklow residents. Obviously if the 25% there may be Wicklow people who are looking to move back home as well, so it actually could be even higher than that. So I think that is a positive that the members should all note. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Brian. Cllr Lourda Scott.

CLLR SCOTT: Thank you very much Brian, for your extensive report as always. I have a couple of questions. I wanted to comment on the amazing work that the libraries are doing at the moment. They are a phenomenal resource for the community and their recent lending piece for sensory items is really important for the community. So thank you to the library section. Can I ask is there any update on the appointment of the town's regeneration officer? Like where that recruitment process is at the moment. And I have another question, which I have sent in, but I would like to ask it on the record here as well. There is probably a very little-known reserved function of councillors in the Local Government Act is that we have the power to rescind the Gaming and Lottery Act 1956. I want to ask do we have any written proof that Wicklow as a local authority has adopted Part 3 of the Gaming and Lottery Act please. If so if the Greystones and Wicklow District was included in that adoption? It's something that is becoming of increasing relevance in our own district.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr John Mullen.

CLLR MULLEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Just two brief enough questions. One is the, any update on the RRDF project for Baltinglass? I know we have a request in for extra funding there with the department. We have made a start on the park element there, but it's essential that we get moving on the town centre plans. And on a related matter to that, I know the active travel was announced in the interim period, between our last meeting and I acknowledge, in fairness to the officials, Leonora and her team we had a constructive meeting last week to discuss what I think are the deficiencies in the active travel allocation. In fairness to you, Chief Executive, you acknowledged that last year and you secured some

extra funding for the rural areas. I just want to remind members that we got 8 million out of active travel for the county of Wicklow which is great for the urban, all urban projects that got those funding. But Dublin got 123.6 million. It was pointed out that while this is an urban, the Active Travel started out as an urban funding stream, it is now supposed to be a national urban stream. When we have discussions later on in the year about making sure we fund ourselves correctly through property taxes, I know that Cllr Blake made the point last week. All four Dublin authorities voted to lower the property tax and the Minister, Eamonn Ryan rewarded them with 123.6 million for foot paths and cycleways and Wicklow got 8. I think that needs to be taken into account. I know we are reverting to it shortly on safe speed limits at school. There are rural schools with no foot paths or cycleways.

I am the parent of a school-going child. I filled in a survey and said would it be ever possible that you would allow your child to walk or cycle to school? There is no way, because I couldn't. So the Active Travel Scheme, I think is systemically flawed. I acknowledge, in fairness to the official, they are trying to work on and have a good relationship with the NTA and they are trying to work on it. But it has to be fixed. Because, the way it's going, there is nothing for rural villages and towns out of Active Travel in its current construction.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Stokes.

CLLR STOKES: Go raibh maith agat, Cathaoirleach. Just again to thank Brian for all of his excellent service, as acting Chief Executive. Looking forward to hopefully conditioning to work with you. I just want to ask about the customer service calls. I was reading in the report that there were 6,421 which is quite a lot in fairness. For a month. What I am wondering is how many of those calls were actually answered? Because something that people have raised with me on occasion and I found it even myself trying to call the switchboard, sometimes just doesn't get picked up. So you have to try other ways of trying to get through to somebody. The second question I have got is just in relation to the arrears. I notice year on year in the report that the arrears in December 2021 was in or around 2.4 million. That has increased to 2.8 million as of December 2022. So it's a big jump of 400K. I am wondering, what are the main factors of this and are we ever likely to see this money in the future? So it's quite a concerning amount of money to be missing essentially. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Stokes. Cllr Gail Dunne.

CLLR DUNNE: I am wondering if there is any update on Wicklow Harbour we have been preparing a report for dredging within the harbour. I think we were hoping to do something in March. As time goes by, the harbour

gets worse and worse. I am very concerned over it. I am looking for an update on Wicklow Harbour. The second thing, it's something which has arisen a lot in the last while in my area. It's foot paths in housing estates where the council has taken in charge. I am wondering where the funding is coming from to fix these. Some of these are in charge for 20, 30 years. With trees growing some of the paths have grown into a state of disrepair. I am very much concerned over the state of the foot paths. When I ask about it, I am told we have no money for them. I don't think discretionary money, for me, is not for them schemes. I think it should be used for other schemes. So it's a genuine concern. I am just wondering with the likes of insurance claims and things like that, what percentage of claims are coming from our estates due to foot paths? Last thing, just to safe walking to schools. A school in Ashford is having fierce problems getting their children to school. I understand there is a lot of other projects that are in front of them, but I am looking maybe that we prioritise Nun's Cross, because in fairness, it's a very dangerous road.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Dunne. Cllr Dermot O'Brien.

CLLR D O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Thank you for the report. Just three items. It's first one I wonder could the Chief Executive organise maybe a presentation on the Planning and Development Bill? Again we have many conversations about the erosion of the power or the decision-making or the possibility that local authorities are actually relevant. There is a lot of changes coming with this Bill that I think should be discussed at local level. We are hearing back from people who are paying attention, whether it's to talk about allotments or decision-making around zoning and what not that it is very relevant to us, but that conversations are being had in other places.

So I wonder could we get a presentation on that maybe and have a conversation here. Another question for housing. Is there, what are the barriers to the pace at which we bring houses back in that we refurb and bring local authority houses back into play? I know in my district in Bray there is a huge issue with the huge volume of houses that are empty. We all know again and we have talked about how important it is that people get into the houses. There is a lot of frustration building around that. So is it procurement, availability of contractors and is there a way that we might mitigate that and speed up the pace of it? The final one, Cathaoirleach, again I know we talk about rent arrears on local authority housing, but I would like to get a comment on the commercial rates arrears. That is 6.4 million and maybe even an explanation about specific doubtful arrears is a heading that I don't understand. There is €1.3 million there. So maybe a note on where we are at with commercial rates arrears. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Brian, there is a few questions there, if you would like to distribute them out?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: I will answer a few myself and I can hand out the rest of them. In relation to the TRO I am pleased to report that Deirdre Whitfield has been appointed following an interview process. She has taken up that position and she has also just met recently with the regional TRO in relation to plans for that particular role. So we will be moving forward in relation to that. In relation to the Gaming Act, Cllr Scott raised, I think there have to be research done in relation to that. We wouldn't have the answer straight off. I think we would have to look at a number of resolutions before we could confirm that particular query.

The RRDF position, yes, as you are well aware, Cllr Mullen in her request for an additional two million was sent to the department. They did come back last week looking for additional information. So we sent that on today. So we will continue to press the Department in relation to that. So hopefully we will have an answer shortly in that regard. In relation to the, I suppose the NTA points, like have agreed with you on the record that I do feel that the system the way it is set up, there is more of a focus on the urban areas due to the higher populations and what the NTA are trying to achieve. But, through our own rural scheme and I know there was a couple of projects that were initially funded under the rural scheme which were subsequently funded by the NTA as well. So we are working with them to try and address that as much as we can, but your comments are very much noted. Just in relation to Wicklow Harbour, as part of the application process, there are a number of environmental reports that have to be produced. So we have engaged with a number of consultants who are in the process of developing those environmental reports. They have to be submit the as part of the overall dredging application. So we are progressing that as fast as we can because it is a priority for the council. We have stated that already. In relation to the Planning and Development Bill. I think at a time where we get enough information ourselves, deputy, we are only getting bits and pieces of information as well, so I would agree with you, once we have the full facts and full information in relation to that, I think that would probably be a good idea to have a presentation in that regard. As regards, I think I will hand over to customer service to Lorraine.

LORRAINE: Thank you, Chief Executive. Yeah, the question was that the customer services calls were 6,000, how many of those calls are actually answered? Well, again we will have to have a look at that for you, councillor. We are looking at a number of areas of how to address the large volume of calls and particularly the public representations that are coming in. I know Karen has been in touch with you as a group of members. So I will have to look into that.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Just in relation to the rent arrears, I know Director of Housing Joe Lane emailed the members last week, which outlined the reasons behind that increase and rents, I don't know if the Director wants to add to any of that? Also in relation to the commercial rates I will hand over to our head of finance.

JOE LANE: The arrears from 2.4 to 2.8. That is probably Covid. During Covid we weren't issued, or allowed to issue demand letters, so we did have a more softly-softly approach. But we are dealing with particularly big cases in specific cases. So it's mainly Covid for that particular overhang, Covid would be partially responsible. We would be hoping to pick up those later on, or they will be written off under an agreement. But there is specific conditions for that. Capacity of the relets. You issued, I gave some of the reasons yourself, also at the end of last year, we were significantly over budget. We tried to deal with an upsurge of units and that will continue, we have started again with some of the schemes and we have a new policy regarding not being as, doing refurbishment work rather than total, sorry the minimum that is required rather than a full refurbishing work.

They are, particularly in Bray, a number of units that are much bigger and require a lot of resources and we will have to look at that and we will be talking to the SPC about options for a small cohort of units that will, are very much overbudget. So we are very much over any resources that are available so we will come back and look at that. I think they are the ones you are talking about.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Joe. Breda, commercial rates, please?

BREDA: Just in relation to commercial rate, the doubtful debts is a figure that is calculated annually as part of the annual financial statement process. It's very specific what can be included there. It's accounts or examinership where no communication has been given in regard to likely dividend and arrears can be written off following communication from the receiver. Also if there has been, or it's not been demonstrated to the local authority, so it could be that we know most likely we will award a vacancy, but we don't have enough information to do so at year end. Now, it is the case that we are looking at the rates for 2022 as part of the AFS process. So this year, the arrears will have fallen by the end of the year, but correspondingly our rates write off for the year is going to go up for 2022. But and specific doubtful debts will go down. But that is just writing off debts we know that are non-collectible.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Breda. Breege Kilkenny.

BREEGE KILKENNY: Just to come back to Cllr Gail Dunne and his query with regard to the harbour and the dredging. Just to say to you, it is

really a priority for us within the section. We are meeting every two to three weeks to try and move it on and then just to say that on Friday we had a report from the ecologists saying they hope to start the sampling during the week of February 20th. So when those results come back we need time to analyse and report, but just to rest assured that we are on top of this and meeting every two to three weeks. Okay, thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Members can I go back to the speed limit review now. Put a pause on the manager's report and I will hand you over to Leonora.

LEONORA EARLS: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. We have now included amendment of Cllr R O'Connor. It appears under, I am trying to share it here. We are now putting it under the Kilmac map. It's now CC Kilmac National School is what we have entered in. It's a periodic speed limit at Kilmacanogue National School. That is included in the amendments with he have put up on the screen.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, thank you, Leonora. Brian and Michael.

HELEN: So we are proposing to adopt speed limit bye laws for county Wicklow to improve them as circulated and also amendment CC for Kilmacanogue National School. I need a proposer and seconder?  
Cllr Shay Cullen.

Seconded by Cllr Aoife Flynn-Kennedy. I will now call a vote.

[Vote taken]

HELEN PURCELL: Waiting for Cllr O'Neill to get to their seat.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr O'Neill.

HELEN PURCELL: 26 for and 6 not present.

CATHAOIRLEACH: That's great. Leonora Earls, Director.

LEONORA EARLS: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Members, thank you very much. Again, thank you very much for the engagement that you have undertaken in the last year or so, with the team. I'd like to thank Brian, Pius, and Michael. Brian did a huge amount of work in bring the bye-laws to you. Pius did all of the mapping for the entirety of the bye-laws. Michael oversaw the project in its totality. Thank you very much for your engagement on it.

Members, just to reiterate again, the bye-laws will come into effect on 1st June, with the exception of the periodic bye-laws which will come in from 1st August.



The 29 amendments that we didn't consider complied with the Managing and Setting Speed Limits in Ireland Guidelines. We will have to refer them to the appeals process. We will keep you informed of how they worked with that process. It goes through a Regional Board of a Chief Superintendent, TII, and the Road Safety Authority. We will keep you informed and in the meantime, we will implement the bye-laws. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Leonora. Pius, I want to apologise to Pius. I did thank Michael and Brian. Unless you are standing in front of me, I can't see you. I do apologise. Thank you very much. Members, I will go to the suspension and Standing Orders now. Cllr Behan. If we have time, we will go back to the Manager's Report. If we don't get to your questions, please email them in. As I ran out of time last meeting as well, I believe all of your questions were answered. So, if they're not, get on to me and I will follow it up.

Cllr Behan. Oh, I apologise. I'm sorry. No, that's okay. Cllr Kavanagh. I apologise.

CLLR KAVANAGH: As you can see there from the wording ... can everybody see the Suspension of Standing Orders or do you need to have it re-read?

HELEN PURCELL: I can read it out.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Are you asking me, Cllr Kavanagh? I have had it read out to me. Anyway. Helen will read it out for other members.

HELEN PURCELL: That the members of Wicklow County Council object strenuously to the Coillte's decision to partner with Gresham House in the purchase of this fund, depriving the Irish people of the profits accruing and at the same time driving it up the price of agricultural land which could be bought by Irish farmers.

Furthermore, this Council calls on to the Government to halt this arrangement immediately and ensure the assets remain in the hands of the Irish people. Proposed by Cllr Mary Kavanagh. Seconded by Cllr Peir Leonard. Cllr Tom Fortune and Cllr Joe Behan are also associated.

CLLR KAVANAGH: First and foremost, my own interest in this is because Wicklow is such a forestry county. It is well known for it. It is one of the things that is synonymous with Wicklow.

Back on 18th January, I attended a meeting with councillors from all over the country and some TDs to discuss this particular issue. Some of the issues that came to the fore -- well, first of all, there was a huge amount

of passion at this meeting and anger about what is happening, mainly from the farming community, it has to be said.

First of all, some of the things that came out of it. I took some notes. There's 100,000 hectares by 2050 will need to be under forestry and there's a target of 18% of the country has to be under forestry. This group, the investors will be looking for land from all over the country, including the midlands, Wicklow and everywhere, which will drive the price of agricultural land up. They won't be going for, you know, bog-quality land, they will be going for top quality land. That will drive the cost of land out of the reach of an awful lot of the farming community. The UK fund will be available to access single farm grants, and other farmers won't be able to compete for land for agricultural purposes.

Let's see what else I have noted. One of the TDs said, Michael Fitzmorris said, "Everything will be fine until 2030 and then it will be downhill after that because Coillte are only looking after it until 2030 and they will go from being landowners to tenants who will be managing the land." they were looking for clean land with no trees on it, 50% conifer, 50% broad leaf. Somebody said what happened in Leitrim was the march of Sitka. I could go on and on.

There's a huge amount of anger against this selling and use of our land for UK investment firm when it could be benefiting our own agricultural community. It will also lead to the detriment of rural communities because when farming starts to go downhill, which it will, if forestry takes off at this huge pace, then rural community life will suffer. We have to be seen to be doing something and to register our anger at this, and the fact that we don't think it's the way to go. So, I just wanted to propose this motion and to send it to the Department for Agriculture.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Corrigan, is it on this issue? No. Okay. Cllr Derek Mitchell. Thank you. Cllr Peir Leonard.

CLLR LEONARD: I'd like to second it. I'd like to thank Cllr Behan and acknowledge him for bringing this forward as well and between all of us. We received a petition from Save our Forests which is an alliance of a lot of environmental NGOs, rural communities and others across the country. Some of the issues they brought up about it -- I attended the webinar with Cllr Kavanagh there in December. There's huge concern about the erosion of our rural communities, as we know when we have spoken about it at many meetings here in regard to planning and stuff like that.

I suppose one of the main issues is when you have huge monoculture of Sitka spruce forestry and you're not looking at creating incentives instead

for farmers. You're creating a common enemy for our rural communities that they don't need at the moment when they're already struggling.

So, I would be more on board with -- I would be more on board with a model that would actually create incentives for our agricultural community, rather than trying to create something that is going to compete with them for somebody else to profit from.

I will read out some of the texts from the Save our Forests. "It will result in the future expansion of Coillte's monoculture Sitka Forest model, that negatively effects on farming, soil and water quality, and which has failed to advance the sustained forestation we already need. Public funds should be used to support farmers and rural communities to sustain the forestry model. As a matter of urgency, we demand the Government to intervene to stop this and similar Coillte Gresham foreign partnership equity deals, and to protect agriculture and forestry lands from vulture funds, to reform the Coillte Act and alter Coillte's mandate on climate committee recommendations in 2019."

There's more. You can go on to the website and read the rest. But, basically, that's it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Leonard. Cllr Joe Behan.

CLLR BEHAN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Just to add to what my two colleagues have said. Are we becoming slaves in this country? An Irish Government body Coillte who are tasked with the management of an Irish asset, forestry, have joined up with the largest commercial forestry investment fund in the UK. The result of which will be that we will be like the tenants. Coillte will manage the forest but the investors, who are worldwide investors, will take away the profits. We have a Government that either didn't know or didn't care that this was happening right under their noses, with a semi-state body. That's point number one. In my opinion, a hugely important one, that we are allowing a UK-based forestry developer to benefit from 12,000 hectares, not acres, 12,000 hectares of Irish forestry lands. They already own 4,000.

As farmers have said, this has a way of artificially building up the price for other farmers who might want to build other forestry or do something else with the land so there's competition again for our Irish farmers in relation to that.

The other point, I only discovered this recently. We will be giving as a state almost €200 million in grants to this outfit, this Gresham House investment fund. They will be getting grants for developing the forestry. They will take the profits, the grants and will basically own the land and we will be the servants who will run it for them. Now, as a nation, have we no self-respect that there hasn't been a huge outcry,

right across the country, about this, about what is effectively an attack on our sovereign wealth.

The other point. I acknowledge I'm not a green expert but another aspect of this that might trouble people who will be, you know, very much more acquainted with carbon credits, is that apparently carbon credits that will come from this forestry development can be sold on the international carbon credit market and can be bought by companies around the world at a very top price in order to do away with their obligations under carbon control and so on and so forth.

So, even the asset we would have as carbon, the carbon credit that comes from having forestry, that will be used by this investment company to sell to the highest bidder around the world. We won't have control of the carbon credits unless we own the land. If we don't own the land, we won't have the carbon credit. Therefore, we're losing that benefit as well. To my mind, this is something that I think we should all get behind and we should ensure that not only the minister for agriculture but the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste should get a copy of this motion if it is passed today.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Behan. Cllr Sylvester Bourke.

CLLR BOURKE: There's a lot of negativity of this deal amongst farmers. I would support that feeling as well. I think that there are some things that we could possibly do to mitigate it a little bit. One, for example, an example came to mind. I remember when I was Chair of IFA in the mid-'90s, Coillte had a policy of buying up land, a lot of it in County Wicklow for Christmas tree farms, which was interfering with the viability of smaller local farmers. One example, they bought 300 acres outside Rathdrum. I think it was the first task I had as Chairman of the IFA was to negotiate a 50-acre buyback for two local farmers to improve their viability. It is a pity that the mechanism like that is not enshrined in this deal, where local farmers who need more land to improve their viability would be able to buy back from this giant Coillte fund. So, I think that's something that maybe we should lobby for or look for an amendment to, so if cases arise, where there's a conflict between both, the local farmers would win out.

I'd like to propose it would be amended, tagged on as an amendment to whatever letter goes to the Department of Agriculture voicing our concern, annoyance and disgust at this policy.

It might be worthy of getting some kind of response from Coillte as to what their rationale is for doing this, because surely they're not that poorly funded that they had to go abroad to get investors to buy land with them. I mean, the Government is quite awash with cash and this type of

funding. It should have been obtained from the strategic investment fund from Ireland or another means in-house rather than going abroad. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Miriam Murphy.

CLLR MURPHY: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I suppose I have a little bit was country in me. It is quite upsetting to hear that another country is coming in to take our beautiful countryside land and ownership. I would second what Cllr Bourke just said about the IFA. I was just wondering do we know how they will support this. We are trying to get young people back into farming in their own land and in their own county, and support forestry and whatever and there's a lot of, I suppose, complications in doing that, but this will be another mark against having that involvement of bringing our own farmers back into the land, and to invest in our beautiful, beautiful woodlands and whatever.

I mean, it is quite a sad day to hear this. I think even within the county, we sit and we look around what we've got here and to think that could be taken over by something else, it's very upsetting. I would really lobby on behalf of this not happening. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Murphy. Cllr John Mullen.

CLLR MULLEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I'd be broadly supportive of this motion. Again, I do think it's important to realise in the broad step change there has been a change in policy in the past few years. If you talk to private forestry owners and to Coillte, the future of Irish forestry is actually quite bright.

However, in this particular issue and case, I do agree with the councillors who put down this motion. This is one of the more worrying aspects of what is going to be a very important industry and is an important industry, my own father worked in the forestry industry. Not only does it take an amount of the land space within Wicklow but it is an important recreational asset. It is a huge part of our tourism product.

I do believe there are questions to be answered. I think the Minister is trying to get Coillte to answer those questions. If we can be of any support to the minister to get this changed, I think we should support this motion.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Mullen. Cllr Dermot O'Brien.

CLLR D O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Very briefly, I want to support the motion. Maybe to reiterate the point that we have a state-owned forestry company acting as an agent for a foreign investment fund

and that's mind melting in its own right, never mind the use of taxpayers' money to do so. To me, all you need to do, who is not supporting this, who has concerns around this, and that's the people of the land, the people who want to hold the land in its precious perpetuity to the people who value the land for what it's there for. To me, if it feels like it is not selling off, it's selling out. I think that's why we need to challenge this.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Erika Doyle.

CLLR DOYLE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Yes, there's been a lot of scrutiny of this. There should be always scrutiny of things like this. But just a couple of notes, if I could go through a couple of things here because I'd say about 50% of what I've heard actually isn't true. So just to clarify a couple of points, if that's okay.

Under EU law, Coillte can't access grant payments themselves, so that's why this has to happen. So, that's just one of the points that was made there about why this is happening. They can't and that's EU law. We can't really do anything about that.

Coillte will manage the forests, so there's no selling off or anything going on. If a farmer or landowner wants to sell land for forestry, Coillte can buy it or plant it and manage it. Yes, using the private capital but, you know, Coillte will continue to manage it. It is important to say that. Once it goes to forestry, it's by law under the Forestry Act, it's required to stay in forestry. So, nothing can happen to it after that, whether the farmer owns it, Coillte owns it or anybody else.

There's also, under that law, there will be no more Sitka plantations and no more monoculture. Those days are gone and that's enshrined in law now so that can't happen anymore. Just to add that, because I know there was a concern about that. The forest has to be mixed now by law. Also, the other thing to note is that the farmers will be paid a premium for 20 years under this programme compared to other forest owners. Farmers will receive a premium for 20 years and other forest owners only for 15 years. They do have an opportunity to benefit from this. I know it probably doesn't deal with all of the concerns that are there but people I think shouldn't be repeating half-truths they've heard from a couple of different sources without maybe looking into it themselves, because if you're going to deal with something controversial, it should be in dealing with the facts and not sort of a set of whispers that has evolved.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Gerry O'Neill.

CLLR O'NEILL: [Problem with sound] ... owns it, so I'm lost there. We should really take it a bit more serious in Wicklow here, because there's

two thirds of forestation in Wicklow, owned by Coillte. We should be more hands on, not only it is a ... [inaudible] ... there are other areas in West Wicklow that has been destroyed by poor plantation. We have had a lot of problems with a lot of flooding of small farms by the plantations. But I mean, I don't know about Coillte. I think there's a lot of stuff going on there, that I'm a bit lost with it too. Throughout Wicklow, throughout Ireland, Coillte seem to have the power to sell off sites to who they like, really. In Wicklow, I know sites there have been sold off for 15,000 to 20,000, where the lad down the road might have to spend 300,000 on the site to build a house. So the procedure really in selling off land and even buying land, I think it is all up in the air, you know. Maybe we should dwell about it, maybe dwell on this some other time, but I know one site there only recently owned by Coillte and the sign went up that evening. It was removed later on in the evening and the site was sold within two or three days. It's probably the handiest way of getting a site to build a house on that you could ever get.

I don't think it is fair, and it is just the kind of ... it's a free-for-all seemingly in there and I'd like to see more accountability. I mean, if it's state owned, it's state owned and we can't have sites going for building sites going for 15,000 or 20,000 to whom? And then the lad up the road might have to spend 200,000 on a site to build a house. I don't really know what -- I don't know the full structures of the whole lot but I do know that it is state owned and the state responsible for all of this stuff.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Cllr Gerry O'Neill.

That's all of the members that want to speak on this. Helen, are we going to write a letter?

HELEN PURCELL: Can I just check, with Cllr Kavanagh and Cllr Leonard, do you wish to make the amendment with the addition that Cllr Bourke had suggested or do you want to leave it as you had originally worded it?

Can you turn your microphone on?

And as suggested by Cllr Behan, that it is issued to the Taoiseach and Tánaiste?

CLLR KAVANAGH: Thank you. Is it possible for it to be circulated to other councils and the Minister for the Environment as well.

HELEN PURCELL: Yes. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. What time are we at now?

HELEN PURCELL: We have four minutes. Do you want to come back to the Chief Executive's Report?

CLLR MURPHY: Sorry, can I ...?

HELEN PURCELL: Is everyone in agreement?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Are we all in agreement?

CLLR MURPHY: Can I ask Cathaoirleach through the Chair, would this motion go to the IFA, no, in Wicklow or nationally?

CATHAOIRLEACH: We don't know that.

HELEN PURCELL: It wasn't requested.

CLLR MURPHY: That's okay.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Corrigan, your light was on earlier on.

CLLR CORRIGAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I wanted to raise, I welcome the active travel allocations for 2023 but I just want clarification that the allocations from 2022 will be proceeded with, particularly the ones in the Bray MD area that have not been completed, the Enniskerry pedestrian improvement scheme, The Scalp improvement scheme, the Southern Cross improvements and the Kilmacanogue to Bray Retail Park greenway. These are the projects that the communities will be told will be funded and progressed. I need to back to the communities and let them know that they will happen and that they will be progressed. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Derek Mitchell.

CLLR MITCHELL: The report mentioned about the various wind farms, three or four of them, doing consultations. The consultations which they're undertaking are only to be so individual farm, they don't view the coast in its entirety, and in fact, the whole coast they're planning to cover from north to south with large wind farms quite close, closer than any other European country would allow in such volume. I'm asking that Wicklow County Council would do a visual assessment of the combination of these. My understanding is that under the MARA Act Wicklow County Council will have to make a submission to the planning for this and I think we should be prepared and get a visual assessment of the combination of all of these done. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Mitchell. Cllr Gerry Walsh.



CLLR WALSH: Greystones cliff walk, I was wondering if there is an update on that. There's significant funding there to be spent before year-end. I'm wondering there.

Also Cllr Dunne brought up the issue of footpath maintenance in a state. I know there's the suggestions that some of that money -- that maintenance work be carried out from discretionary fund money. I don't think that is ideal. There should be a separate funding mechanism because this is an ongoing funding programme on some of the older estates. I certainly don't believe the discretionary fund coming from the local property tax increase should go towards it there. I would like to look at a separate funding source.

And also just lastly, the climate action team recruitment and the seven positions advertised, if there is any update on that. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Walsh. Cllr Sylvester Bourke.

CLLR BOURKE: I tried to get earlier in with these briefly. The Arklow Business Park, is there any update on the provision of commercial sites for businesses who want to set up or relocate into a premises that they can buy from the council? It was mooted a few years ago. It seemed to have gone dormant. I was asked over the weekend by a business who rents their premises but wants their own premises. Could the council provide them with a site in Arklow?

Also, Cathaoirleach, could you just update us as well on what projects you will the executive will be applying under the new round of RDF fresh call?

Finally, the strategic infrastructure made mention of a project in Arklow of a one-10kv station, could you clarify, is that for the Echelon Business Park outside of Arklow or for an offshore wind farm? It is mentioned in the manager's report.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. I will try to get those questions answered for you before the next meeting.

We have the Tidy Towns protocol. Go ahead, Cllr Timmins.

CLLR TIMMINS: Just to acknowledge the housing, but could you add in the timescale each house has been vacant.

Second the Baltinglass, please keep the pressure on the department. Remind you three years and four months since we were awarded that funding. Finally sorry to see our bridge application. We don't have a footbridge application in

over the Slaney and Baltinglass. We were under the impression there was something there, now it's just another feasibility study. So really disappointing nothing has happened on the bridge.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Kavanagh, one minute in you can squeeze it in.

CLLR KAVANAGH: Thank you to Wicklow County Council for engaging with the emergency repair works at the Murrough. Just to ask, can it be done ASAP, because the path is about to go under in the next couple of weeks?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, members, for being very patient with me today and I hope to get them last few questions answered before the next meeting.

Okay, protocol meeting next. Then we have the Tidy Towns award outside at 5:30, if a few members could hang around. Thank you very much and safe home.

[END OF MEETING]